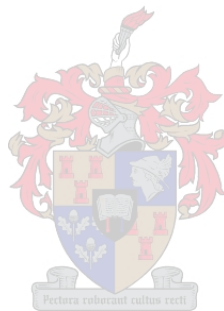


# **THE CAREER OF SOUTH AFRICAN SOPRANO NELLIE DU TOIT, BORN 1929**

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**ALEXANDRA XENIA SABINA MOSSOLOW**



**Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Music in the Faculty of Arts, at the University of Stellenbosch**

**Stellenbosch  
April 2003**

**Supervisor:  
Acáma Fick**

## **DECLARATION**

**I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.**

**Signature:.....**

**Date:.....**

## ABSTRACT

Who is Nellie du Toit and what is the extent of her career as singer and voice teacher? The void in South African historiography in respect to the life and work of South African performing artists gave rise to investigate the career of Nellie du Toit. Known as one of South Africa's most illustrious opera singers of the 1960's and 1970's, who made her career exclusively in South Africa, she is regarded as one of the most sought after voice teachers. Her career as singer spanned almost three decades. As voice teacher her career of over forty years is still ongoing.

This study traces her biographical details chronologically beginning with her youth years in a very musical family. Her full-time music studies took place at the South African College of Music in Cape Town, from 1950 to 1952. Here her singing teacher Madame Adelheid Armhold and Gregorio Fiasconaro, head of the Opera School, were influential in laying the foundations for her career. After a period of over a year in England Du Toit was one of several young South African singers to contribute to pioneering opera in South Africa, often sung in the vernacular.

Du Toit sang in forty-five opera seasons for the Provincial Arts Councils in the seventeen years between 1963 and 1979, when her opera career ended. In 1986 she returned to the opera stage as the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss. This was also her final farewell as opera singer. The title role in *Madama Butterfly* can be regarded as her hallmark. Her stunning portrayal of Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* was regarded as a mile stone in South African opera history, as was her interpretation of Jenůfa. She was also hailed as a Mozart singer. Not only was she regarded as one of the world's best "Butterflies" at the International Madame Butterfly Competition in Japan in 1970, but has she also been awarded three Nederburg Opera Prizes. Apart from opera, Du Toit gave numerous recitals of classical and light classical music, regularly sang in orchestral concerts and oratorio and was active as broadcasting artist. Her work as voice teacher always ran parallel to her singing activities. Her academic career at the Universities at Stellenbosch and Cape Town spanned fourteen years: from 1980 to 1993.

Nellie du Toit's achievements in music were laureated with the Medal of Honour from the Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986 and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch in 1998.

## OPSOMMING

Wie is Nellie du Toit en wat is die omvang van haar loopbaan as sangeres en sangpedagoog? Die leemte in Suid-Afrikaanse historiografie met betrekking tot die lewe en werk van Suid-Afrikaanse uitvoerende kunstenaars het aanleiding gegee tot hierdie ondersoek na die loopbaan van Nellie du Toit. Bekend as een van Suid Afrika se vermaarde operasangeresse van die 1960's en 1970's wat haar loopbaan eksklusief in Suid-Afrika gemaak het, word sy ook beskou as een van die mees gesogte sangpedagoë. Haar loopbaan as uitvoerende kunstenaar het oor byna drie dekades gestrek. Haar loopbaan as sangpedagoog, ná meer as veertig jaar, gaan steeds voort.

Hierdie studie ondersoek haar lewe en loopbaan chronologies, beginnende met haar jeugjare in 'n baie musikale gesin. Haar voltydse musiekstudies aan die Suid-Afrikaanse Musiekkollege in Kaapstad het van 1950 tot 1952 geduur. Hier het Madame Adelheid Armhold, haar sangpedagoog, en Gregorio Fiasconaro, hoof van die Operaskool, 'n stewige fondament vir haar loopbaan gelê. Na 'n tydperk van meer as 'n jaar in Engeland, het Nellie du Toit een van die jong Suid-Afrikaanse sangers geword wat operabaanbrekerswerk in Suid-Afrika gedoen het.

Du Toit het in vyf-en-veertig operaseisoene vir die Uitvoerende Kunsterade gesing in die sewentien jaar tussen 1963 en 1979, die jaar waarin haar operaloopbaan tot 'n einde gekom het. In 1986 het sy na die operaverhoog teruggekeer in die rol van die Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* van Richard Strauss. Dit was ook haar finale vaarwel as operasangeres. Die titelrol in *Madama Butterfly* kan as Du Toit se kenteken beskou word. Haar merkwaardige uitbeelding van Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* is beskou as 'n mylpaal in die Suid-Afrikaanse operageskiedenis. Dit geld ook vir haar vertolking van Jenûfa. Sy was ook hoog aangeskryf as Mozart-sangeres. Nellie du Toit is as een van die wêreld se beste "Butterflies" aangewys tydens die Internasionale Madame Butterfly Kompetisie in Japan in 1970. Daarbenewens het sy in Suid-Afrika drie Nederburg Operapryse ingepalm. Afgesien van opera het Nellie du Toit talryke uitvoerings van klassieke en ligte klassieke musiek gegee en gereeld in orkeskonserte, oratoria en as uitsaakunstenaar opgetree. Naas haar loopbaan as uitvoerder het haar aktiwiteite as sangpedagoog byna ononderbroke voortgegaan. Haar akademiese loopbaan aan die Universiteite van Stellenbosch en Kaapstad het oor veertien jaar gestrek: van 1980 tot 1993.

Nellie du Toit se prestasies in musiek is bekroon met die Erepenning van die Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns in 1986 en 'n eredoktorsgraad van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch in 1998.

**DEDICATED**

**TO**

**NELLIE DU TOIT**

**AND**

**ALL SOUTH AFRICAN SINGERS**

**OF PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Primarily my gratitude is due to my supervisor, Ms Acáma Fick, for inspiring the interesting topic and for her academic guidance and reseach suggestions.

I also wish to thank the persons who were interviewed and who provided valuable information during the conducting of the research between 1999 and 2002. They have contributed greatly to the findings of the research project.

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Finally, I would like to thank my esteemed teacher, Dr Nellie du Toit, for making available a broad spectrum of source material, and for her invaluable co-operation in the course of this study.

Stellenbosch

April 2003

A.X.S. Mossolow

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ATKV</b>	Afrikaanse Taal-en Kultuurvereniging
<b>CAPAB</b>	Cape Performing Arts Board
<b>Ed(s).</b>	Editor(s)
<b>FAK</b>	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings
<b>i.a.</b>	<i>inter alia</i> – amongst others
<b>jr</b>	junior
<b>NAPAC</b>	Natal Performing Arts Council
<b>PACOFS</b>	Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State
<b>PACT</b>	Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal
<b>RAM</b>	Royal Academy of Music
<b>s.a.</b>	<i>sine anno</i> – no date
<b>s.d.</b>	<i>sine dato</i> – no date
<b>s.l.</b>	<i>sine loco</i> – no place of publication
<b>s.n.</b>	<i>sine nomine</i> – no publisher
<b>s.p.</b>	<i>sine pagina</i> – no page/unpaginated
<b>SABC</b>	South African Broadcasting Corporation
<b>SACM</b>	South African College of Music
<b>SAME</b>	Suid Afrikaanse Musiekensiklopedie
<b>SWAPAC</b>	South West African Performing Arts Council
<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town
<b>UNISA</b>	University of South Africa

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

**Nellie du Toit** is one of South Africa's most renowned sopranos. Her reputation as singer grew out of her career as performing artist from the fifth until the seventh decade of the twentieth century. Her outstanding achievements have been lauded with several awards. She is also one of South Africa's best-known voice teachers.

The **primary motivation** for this study is the author's **personal interest** in the career of Nellie du Toit, whom she heard for the first time in 1970 in a light music concert in Windhoek. Ten years later Du Toit became the voice teacher of the author, who however did not live in South Africa at the time of Du Toit's opera career and had no further opportunity to hear her in any live performance except her last one as the Marschallin in Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. This memorable performance increased the author's interest and curiosity with regard to Du Toit's career as performer, the more so since Dr Du Toit herself never spoke about or boasted about her career successes. Readily available information on Du Toit's career, apart from a short and incomplete biography in the South African Encyclopaedia of Music, could not be found. The absence of a detailed biography and systematic study of her career therefore increased the motivation to research and reconstruct the career of Nellie du Toit.

### 1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

If one **defines the history of music** as the scientific account of musical life in its diverse expressions from the historically accessible past, and its main aim as lying exclusively in the knowledge of the past (Broeckx 1959:15), the South African music historiography still shows many voids, especially with regard to the history of its performing artists. Very few comprehensive studies or detailed, scientifically researched biographies of South African performing artists had been undertaken and/or published so far. This **vacuum** needs to be filled.

The **primary aim** of this study is therefore the investigation, scientific documentation and reconstruction of the development of Nellie du Toit's career as singer in South Africa, with **secondary focus** on her teaching career. Hopefully this study can contribute to – at least – a more detailed inscription in a future South African Music Encyclopaedia.

This author also argues that this research is timely in terms of the conservation of archival material that has to be documented before everything might be lost. This study therefore also aims at describing the career of one of South Africa's greatest twentieth century sopranos for the benefit of future generations of South African singers, in the conviction that they will be inspired by the example set by Nellie du Toit.

As the aim and contents of this study pertain to the discipline known as "historical musicology", it is not possible to formulate hypotheses in the style of systematic musicology. Qualitative musical parameters are also not measurable in the style of parameters of disciplines in the natural sciences. A probable hypothesis can be stated though: this study may prove that Nellie du Toit's standard of artistry as well as her contribution to South African music history had been greater than assumed at the onset of this research project.

### 1.3 SOURCES

The first and **primary** source of information was Dr Nellie du Toit herself, who was interviewed several times. Secondly Dr Du Toit's personal collection of source material was made available. This included some programmes, an ordered journal of press clippings from her first operetta to her early career following her studies, as well as a container of press clippings, telegrams, and some letters relating to the rest of her career. Unidentified press clippings from this source will be referred to in the Bibliography as "Nellie du Toit's private collection of press clippings".

**Other primary sources** included **interviews** with family members, colleagues and musicians who had been Dr Du Toit's contemporaries. Further sources, in the form of recorded interviews and performances, were obtained from the **SABC Archives**.

**Secondary sources** include magazine articles and post graduate theses on related topics. **Books** and memoirs on the historical aspects of opera in the latter half of the twentieth century in South Africa that were consulted were: Stanley Peskin's *PACT Opera: the first 25 years. A personal view*, the biography of Gregorio Fiasconaro, *I'd do it again* and *For the love of singing*, both written by Désirée Talbot, Anna Bender's *Note van herinnering*, Donald Inskip's *40 Little Years – The story of a theatre* and Kloiber and Konold's *Rudolf Kloiber: Handbuch der Oper*.

**Brochures** included: *The First ten years – CAPAB/KRUIK – Die eerste tien jaar – 1963-1973, Dekade/Decade – ’n oorsig in beeld/A pictorial review TRUK/PACT Transvaalse Raad vir die Uitvoerende Kunste/Performing Arts Council Transvaal 1963-1972* and *Performing Arts in South Africa – cultural aspirations of a young country*. **Encyclopaedias** included: *The Suid-Afrikaanse Musiek Ensiklopedie, Dizionario Enciclopedico dell’Opera Lirica* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Preliminary research on the topic was done before Nellie du Toit herself was asked to give a broad outline of her life and her singing career up to the present. Then the **press clippings** made available by her were **photocopied, rearranged chronologically and systematically incorporated in files and sub-folders**. Additional concert and opera **programmes** had to be collected from various sources, since few were initially available from Dr Du Toit, who could retrieve the greater part of these at a late stage of the study. The programmes were arranged chronologically and collected in files. **Undated programmes**, separately filed, were compared with press reviews and articles in order to gauge their dates.

From this preliminary compilation of basic material a **chronological chart** was drawn up with **every singing activity** listed with date, place and co-artists involved. This assisted with the reconstruction of the broad historical overview, which in due course was supplemented with further facts obtained from subject related books and from additional newspaper clippings from (i.a.) the Stellenbosch Music Department library and the SABC archives. Since **no database for South African musicians** exists, search projects via the **Internet** into databases (SABINET, SA Media, VUKA) proved to be futile.

A chronological **chart** was drawn up of all **operas presented** by the **four Provincial Arts Councils**. Operas in which Nellie du Toit performed were printed in bold font, citing also the conductor and producer of each opera season. This chart could only be completed by using the method of cross-reference to different sources in order to determine in which operas Du Toit sang.

Since Nellie du Toit could not always remember the dates of her performances, **conversations and interviews** were conducted with people who had been able to follow the development of her career at close hand over the years. This was helpful in ordering events chronologically and in viewing them in the historical context of the period being researched. For this purpose the researcher also visited Durban and Johannesburg, where the archives of the SABC were searched for recordings and radio interviews made with Nellie du Toit.

## 1.5 SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF THIS STUDY

Since Nellie du Toit's opera career was virtually concluded in 1979, it belongs to the "historic past". This fact made this study topic feasible. However, subjectivity can be a problem in any scientific study, and great care had to be exercised to maintain an objective approach in this study of the career of a person who is still alive.

Because Nellie du Toit's career as a singing teacher is still ongoing and therefore not yet wholly part of the historical past, it had to receive much less attention in this study. Aspects resorting to the discipline of vocal pedagogy – such as analysis of her teaching method(s) – were not deemed relevant in terms of the historiographical character of this study.

With regard to research and work problems: Numerous **undated press clippings** had to be studied in comparison with available programmes in order to ascertain the correct chronology. A similar problem was encountered with **undated programmes**. Many of these did state the date, but lacked the year of the performance – or both. This seems to have been a common emission in concert programmes until the late 1960's. Since Dr Du Toit could retrieve many programmes only during the latter half of the researcher's study, the verification of certain performance dates and complementary information proved to be a challenge.

In compiling an overview of all operas produced by the Arts Councils in the years of Du Toit's operatic career, it was difficult to obtain complete information from these councils (or what is left of them), because they had gradually been disbanded in the mid- to late nineties before the onset of this study. The publications *The first ten years of CAPAB/KRUIK – Die eerste tien jaar – 1963-1973* and *CAPAB/KRUIK OPERA – 1965-1969* revealed all operas presented by CAPAB until 1972, however without mentioning in which of those Nellie du Toit (i.a.) sang.

The library of Artscape could provide the researcher with copies of some programmes, which however were also partially undated. The book by Stanley Peskin, *PACT the first 25 years. A personal view*, which lists (i.a.) the casts of all productions between 1963 and 1985, was helpful in determining Du Toit's contribution to operas for PACT between 1963 and 1979. Unfortunately this book does not give any dates of performances. There was no detailed printed source material available from the former offices of NAPAC or PACOFS. Information had to be obtained through personal interviews with different persons.

The **general layout** and content-presentation of this thesis initially posed some problems. The question of whether the content should be presented chronologically or according to genre was initially a problematic one. It was decided to adhere to a chronological order in the first four chapters. Nellie du Toit made important contributions to opera since the inception of the Arts Councils in 1963, but her concert career also continued parallel to this. This fact influenced the decision to give a **chronological account per genre for the 1960's and 1970's** respectively, instead of running a strict chronological thread throughout the history of her career. With reference to these two decades her opera activities are therefore dealt with first, followed by a chronological delineation of her other singing activities and teaching. The years from 1980 to 2002 were covered in one chapter. This comprises mainly her academic career, her other singing activities after the end of her opera career and her comeback to the opera stage in 1986.

The author also considered it necessary to incorporate verbatim extracts from important press reviews in the discourse. Afrikaans critiques had to be translated into English, thereby sometimes losing the exactness and original character. Some of the most important Afrikaans reviews were then placed in a special addendum for cross-reference.

**Nellie du Toit's private container of press clippings** as well as her **journal of press clippings** were regarded as **primary sources** although most clippings are without indication of newspaper title, or author, or precise date and mostly without page number. The verification of these details by means of research in the National Library of South Africa proved to be a too time consuming and a nearly impossible task. Articles with unknown authors are therefore found in the Bibliography under "Unidentified author". Undated articles were matched with programmes and performances and given an approximate year, stating in brackets that the date is assumed.

**The capitalisation of opera titles** was done according to the example of the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Opera titles in this thesis were always given in the language in which they were originally set to music.

## 1.6 STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

The **Introductory Chapter** sets out the personal motivation, purpose, sources, method, specific problems encountered as well as the structure of the thesis. **Chapter 1** describes Du Toit's childhood and youth in the Transvaal. **Chapter 2** delineates her studies at the College of Music in Cape Town and includes a list of operas sung in those three years. **Chapter 3** describes her early professional years, first in England, then back in South Africa where she undertook her first big tour with the tenor Marcel Wittrisch, her Vienna interlude and her final return to South Africa. In **Chapter 4** the development of Du Toit's early career in South Africa is described up until the formation of the Arts Councils in 1963. Operas sung for the different opera associations, as well as other singing activities, teaching and family commitments are discussed. **Chapter 5** describes Du Toit's opera career in the 1960's, since the inception of the Arts Councils, culminating in her sensational success in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1969. **Chapter 6** deals with her singing commitments in the 1960's in genres other than opera. It shortly mentions her teaching activities in these years. **Chapter 7** consists of a chronological survey of Du Toit's opera career from 1971 to 1979 and a list of her Nederburg Opera Awards at the end. **Chapter 8** focuses on her singing activities in the seventies, starting with the Second Worldwide Madame Butterfly Competition in Japan. **Chapter 9** is a delineation of Dr Du Toit's academic teaching activities from 1980 until 1993, her private teaching activities up to the present day – listing students who distinguished themselves – as well as some sporadic singing activities and awards. Du Toit's unexpected come-back cum farewell to the opera stage in 1986 in the role of the Marschallin in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* is discussed. Chapters 4 to 9, which describe the most important years of her singing career, end with summaries. **Chapter 10** documents the views of co-artists on Du Toit's artistry and personality. The conclusions of this thesis are drawn in **Chapter 11**. The **Bibliography**, divided into sub-headings, is followed by **Appendices** numbered from I to XII.



## CHAPTER 1

### CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH: 1929–1949

Petronella Magrita du Toit was born into a musical family on 17 December 1929<sup>1</sup> in the Pietersburg District, Northern Transvaal (now Northern Province) in what was then called the Union of South Africa<sup>2</sup>. Her father, Chris H. du Toit (1898-1982) who hailed from Calvinia in the Cape Province, had studied at the University of Stellenbosch from 1919-1921 (Oosthuizen [ed.] 1983: 7) for the degree B.A.-Ed. During that time he received violin lessons from Hans Endler, the Director of the Stellenbosch Conservatoire of Music. He played the piano and could improvise very well. When Nellie, his first child, was born, Mr Du Toit was the principal of Waterval Farm School in the Pietersburg district. Nellie du Toit's mother, Johanna du Toit, née Pienaar, (1908-1976), was born on the farm "Waterval" in the Pietersburg District. She had a fine natural voice and was a good pianist. Nellie du Toit's brother Pieter was born in 1932 and her sister Marié in 1939. All three children proved to be musically talented. The two Du Toit sisters played the piano whereas their brother played the violin (Du Toit 1998, 2001a, 2001b).

Growing up on a farm, Nellie du Toit recalls that in her early childhood she was a wild little one who loved climbing trees. As they lived twenty miles from town, the whole family would set out on Saturdays on their weekly expedition to town for music lessons, which included piano as well as theory. Johanna du Toit, who was very fond of music, only started taking music lessons as an adult, because she never had the opportunity in her youth. She finally obtained several Licentiate in singing. When she played the harmonium during family devotions, her daughter Nellie sat at her knees, treading the pedals (Du Toit 1994).

Nellie du Toit began her primary school education in 1936 on Waterval Farm School where her father was teaching. At the age of seven she started with piano lessons and at the age of eight won a prize in singing at an eisteddfod in Pietersburg. She had seemingly inherited her natural singing voice from her mother, who coached her with the interpretation of the songs (Du Toit 2001b).

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<sup>1</sup> She was born on the eve of the formation of the FAK, the "Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge" (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies) which was founded at the "Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurkonferensie", on 18 and 19 December 1929 in Bloemfontein (Swart and Geysler, 1979: 5, 14-17). In her career Nellie du Toit was to contribute - amongst others - towards the ideals of the FAK by her performance of opera, oratorio and songs in Afrikaans.

<sup>2</sup> The Union of South Africa (1910-1961) comprised four provinces: The Transvaal, The Cape Province, The Orange Free State and Natal.

She herself stated “I have always sung”<sup>3</sup> (Du Toit 1969). However, she never had any formal vocal training before she was seventeen. She sang for the sheer joy of singing (Du Toit 2001b).

In 1942 the Du Toit family moved to Potgietersrus where Johanna du Toit became a piano and singing teacher. She also performed as a singer, though never professionally (Du Toit 2001a). Chris du Toit taught English at the Potgietersrus High School where his daughter started her secondary schooling, presumably in 1942 (Du Toit 2001b). The family moved to Pretoria when her father enrolled for a Master’s Degree at the University of Pretoria in 1944. From 1944 Nellie du Toit attended the “Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool” in Pretoria (Pretoria Afrikaans Girls’ High School) from where she matriculated in 1947 with music as one of her subjects<sup>4</sup>.

In her last year at high school, she made her singing debut in the Pretoria City Hall on 24 April 1947 in the school operetta *Prinses Pirliwinkie*, in which she sang the leading role. Helena Strauss, a well-known contralto and choral trainer, directed the operetta (Du Toit 1969). An unidentified review mentions that “most of the solo voices were on the weak side...[but that]...we found a promising little singer that interpreted the main role” (Unidentified author 1947).

For Nellie du Toit, “the promising little singer” who was endowed with a natural voice, it was quite obvious that she wanted to become a professional singer and she did everything to the best of her abilities to achieve this goal. Her mind was set to study music, with emphasis on singing.

Du Toit’s piano playing, however, was of such a standard that, at times, she had thought of becoming a concert pianist. However, she later considered her playing not really good enough for a career as pianist (Du Toit 1994). In her primary and high school days she had passed the customary UNISA (University of South Africa) exams in Piano. In Pretoria, Owen Rorke<sup>5</sup> became her piano teacher. After his death she continued her piano lessons with Iva Dumaresq. She had made an intensive study of the piano for nine years before embarking on her formal tertiary studies (Du Toit 1969)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> “Ek het altyd gesing.”

<sup>4</sup> In those days secondary school education comprised four years, commencing with standard 7 and concluding with matriculation.

<sup>5</sup> Owen Rorke (1900-1945). Conductor and music teacher. Organised the Pretoria Eisteddfod from 1936-1945. Musical director of the Pretoria Amateur Opera and Drama Society (Malan [ed.] 1986b: 158-159).

<sup>6</sup> “Aanvanklik wou ek ’n pianis word. Ek was mal daaroor. Ek het vieruur in die oggend opgestaan om te oefen. Maar die klem het later op die sang geval ” (Du Toit 2001a).

Nellie du Toit's father who - in her words - was a bit "old-fashioned" was not in favour of his daughter's plans to study at University: "My father did not think a woman should study, but he saw that I was interested"<sup>7</sup> (Du Toit 1998). According to Nellie du Toit's sister, Marié Gaerdes, Chris and Johanna du Toit had strong characters and their priority was their family. Their mother used to say: "If you [truly] *want* to, then you *can* do it"<sup>8</sup>. She strongly believed that one should use one's God-given talent to serve others, and raised her family according to this credo (Gaerdes 2001a).

Her father's viewpoint demonstrates that Du Toit had an upbringing thoroughly embedded in early twentieth century Afrikaner cultural beliefs. The fact that the Du Toits held family devotions ("huisgodsdien") in their home, during which the customary Calvinistic psalms and Protestant hymns accompanied on the harmonium were sung, also demonstrates that the religious music of the Afrikaner had an important influence on this family's musical culture<sup>9</sup>. Following her mother's beliefs, Nellie du Toit probably also inherited her strong willpower and dedication to her family. This enabled her to accomplish her own ideals.

Other factors which furthered Du Toit's musical formation in her youth, were the influence of the radio and of records, as well as concerts in the Pretoria/Johannesburg area. During the war years, for instance, Pretoria had an Afrikaans Music Club, which was under the auspices of Nunez Holtzhausen, a coloratura soprano who was known as the "nightingale" of the Transvaal. The concerts for this music club took place in the Voortrekker Memorial Hall<sup>10</sup>. Records were becoming more readily available in the late forties; however, Du Toit could not make much use of that medium because the negative economic impact of the past-war years was still tangible<sup>11</sup>.

The SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) which was founded in 1936, became an important factor in music education in South Africa. Until the Arts Councils were formed in 1963, the SABC was the pivot on which the music activities in South Africa hinged. Both local and international musicians were given the opportunity to be made known to the public (Van den Berg 1976: 98 ff.)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> "My pa het nie geglo 'n vrou moet studeer nie. Ons familie was 'n bietjie outyds. Maar hy het gesien ek stel belang."

<sup>8</sup> "As jy *wil* dan *kan* jy."

<sup>9</sup> Compare Hartman (1979: 334-335).

<sup>10</sup> Compare Bender (s.a.): 38 ff., Chapter 4: "Musisering in Pretoria in die oorlogsjare".

<sup>11</sup> "Ek het selde na plaatopnames geluister. Daar was te min geld om hulle te bekostig" (Du Toit 2001b).

<sup>12</sup> See list of South African performing artists.

Operas were broadcast live by the SABC from 1936 (Van den Berg 1976: 147 ff.)<sup>13</sup>. Dr Du Toit (2001b) confirmed that she and her family, who were ardent admirers of music and the human voice, were exposed to these musical influences.

At the age of twelve, Nellie du Toit heard her first opera: Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Delilah* performed in Pretoria's Alhambra Theatre with the tenor Dirk Lourens (Du Toit 2001b). According to her, Pretoria had hardly any opera life in those days, but under the untiring John Connell<sup>14</sup> opera productions were flourishing in Johannesburg between 1929 and 1950. He had formed the Johannesburg Operatic and Dramatic Society in 1919, which presented mainly operetta and ballet. When his "Music Fortnights", that were presented free of charge (Malan 1980b: 285), commenced in 1926, he included music from the operas. The first opera, *Faust*, was performed in Johannesburg in 1929 (Stead 1963: 20), Nellie du Toit's year of birth. From 1946 onwards Connell presented up to ten operas per year.

Hardly any music bursaries were available in the post-war years. Nellie du Toit had to find ways of earning money to finance her studies, as she could not rely only on her parents' financial support. Thus from 1948 to 1949 she worked as office clerk, first for "Eerste Volksbank" and then for the Citrus Board in Pretoria. On leaving school at the age of eighteen, she took singing lessons from Isobel Mc Laren<sup>15</sup> with whom her mother had studied in the past.

At this time Du Toit had a grave accident in her own home. She was severely burnt when a gas geyser caught fire while her mother was cleaning clothing. For the young woman this was a traumatic experience and the doctor recommended to her parents a change of environment for their daughter so that she could distance herself from the scene of the experience. The nineteen-year-old Nellie du Toit then decided to enroll at the South African College of Music in Cape Town for a three-year course in singing, as from February 1950.

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<sup>13</sup> See chronological list.

<sup>14</sup> John Connell (1891-1955), born in Glasgow, came to Johannesburg in 1916 as city organist. As conductor he became musical director of the Johannesburg City Council and organised Johannesburg's musical events between 1916 and 1950 (Malan 1980b: 282-286).

<sup>15</sup> Isobel Mc Laren (1896-1979). Alto, born in Edinburgh, grew up in South Africa. Studied at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in London with an overseas bursary from UNISA. On completion of her studies she lectured at the RAM until 1940 when she returned to South Africa where she performed in operas and concerts. She also produced plays, operas and operettas in Johannesburg and Durban and acted as adjudicator at eisteddfodau (Wolpowitz 1984: 250).

## CHAPTER 2

### STUDIES IN CAPE TOWN: 1950–1952

Nellie du Toit's decision to study at the South African College of Music (SACM), Cape Town, can be regarded as wise. In those days the opportunity for operatic training in South Africa was limited to this music institution which - founded in 1910 - already had an enviable reputation. Music directors included William Bell and Eric Grant. The legendary Prof. Erik Chisholm, director from 1946-1953, was head of the College of Music during Nellie du Toit's period of study. The enterprising Chisholm expanded the College in more than one direction (Malan 1982b: 201-203).

#### 2.1 FIRST YEAR AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLLEGE OF MUSIC: 1950

When Du Toit, at the age of twenty, enrolled for her studies at the College of Music in Cape Town, a new course, "The Performer's Certificate in Music" had just been instituted (Talbot 1978: 26-28). According to Dr Du Toit (2001b) it was called the Performer's Diploma in Opera (PDO) and not the Performer's Certificate in Music. This coincided with the arrival of a new lecturer in singing at the College: Madame Adelheid Armhold. She accepted the appointment as senior lecturer in singing at the College at the end of 1949 (Armhold 1963). The other singing lecturers at that time were Ernest Dennis, Gregorio Fiasconaro and Hedy Faller-Plaut (Talbot 1978: 27). Nellie du Toit, who was not familiar with any of the singing staff, was consigned by the College to the tuition of Armhold (Du Toit 1998).

#### Teachers

Adelheid Armhold, known as "Madame Armhold", was to become the most influential person in the formation of Nellie du Toit's vocal technique. She was her only long-term teacher during her formative years. Dr Du Toit (2001a) comments on her singing teacher as follows:

*She was a fantastic teacher. She laid the foundations for a lifetime. My voice developed considerably in those years. The emphasis was on opera but I actually grew up with lieder. There were not many opportunities to give lieder recitals but I sang many lieder by Mahler, Schubert and Brahms<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> "Sy was 'n fantastiese onderwyser. Sy het die basis gelê vir 'n leeftyd. My stem het baie ontwikkel in daardie jare. Die klem het op opera geval maar ek het eintlik grootgeword met lieder. Daar was nie baie kans om lieder uit te voer nie maar ek het baie Mahler, Schubert en Brahms gesing."

Dr Du Toit almost regarded Armhold as her “guru”. Singing lessons that the author of this thesis received from Du Toit confirm this, since hardly a lesson would pass without her quoting Armhold either in technical terms or in issues concerning a healthy lifestyle. Armhold was a vegetarian who also practised yoga as a philosophy.

Adelheid Armhold was born in Friesland (Malan [ed.] 1980a: 47-48)<sup>2</sup> and obtained a diploma in piano from the Hamburg Conservatoire. At the age of eighteen, she started her studies in singing with Alexander Scarneo and the Russian Prof. Alexander de Rival, an expert in French style, completing her studies at the Maria Ivogün School in Germany. Following her debut as soprano at the age of nineteen she performed in Germany, Switzerland, Holland and England (Malan [ed.] 1980a: 47-48) under well-known conductors such as Sir Henry Wood, Sir Adrian Boult, Furtwängler and Klemperer (Van der Spuy 1963: 11). She was mainly a lieder singer but she was equally successful in oratorio (Malan [ed.] 1980a: 47) notably performing Hindemith’s *Das Unaufhörliche* (Armhold 1963: 32). She never specialised in opera but did, however, sing the roles of Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Agathe (*Der Freischütz*) and Händel characters (in *Herakles* and *Acis and Galathea*).

Armhold’s voice gradually became deeper so that she was a mezzo-soprano when she accepted the teaching post at the College of Music at the end of 1949<sup>3</sup>. In South Africa she specialised in performing European folk songs in different languages, while accompanying herself on the lute. In 1955 she sang in the first South African performance of Schoenberg’s *Buch der Hängenden Gärten*. She resigned from the staff of the College of Music in 1965. After the death of her first husband, the well-known painter Pranas Domsaitis, she taught singing at a music school in Honolulu, Hawaii, where she had moved with her second husband, Mr Zvironas in 1977. According to Du Toit (1998), Adelheid Armhold died in Honolulu at the age of 93. Apart from Nellie Du Toit, numerous well-known South African singers had been her pupils, among them Noreen Berry, Désirée Talbot, George van der Spuy, Xander Haagen, Joy van Niekerk and Louise Wessels.

Armhold’s teaching principles, as laid out in her book *Singing – based on irrefragible [sic] laws* (Armhold 1963: 16), can be condensed to four major points.

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<sup>2</sup> Date and year not stated. According to the Birthday Book of Mrs Irene Cornelius she was born on 4 March 1900 (Cornelius 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Compare Talbot (1978: 27-27). Malan (ed.) (1980a: 48) erroneously states that she became a lecturer in singing at the end of the year 1939.

These are: sing with an open fixed throat; sing on the breath; support the tone; and bring the tone forward. Nellie du Toit received her vocal training according to these principles that have been passed down from the old Italian school of singing. Madame Armhold, who was also trained in the German and French schools (Armhold 1963: 17-18), integrated the Italian principles with her own method of teaching, as outlined in the Introduction to her book as well as in the chapter “The Singer’s Task” (Armhold 1963: 15-20).

In considering tutorial influences on the young Nellie du Toit, the role of the Italian baritone Gregorio Fiasconaro cannot be omitted. He was authoritative as producer of almost all the operas in which Nellie du Toit performed during her student years. Fiasconaro was born in Sicily in 1915 and studied at the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome. A pilot during World War II, he was interned in South Africa as prisoner of war (Malan 1982a: 53-54)<sup>4</sup>. After World War II, he became known in South Africa for his performances with orchestras in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg as well as on radio. Fiasconaro was appointed by Prof. Erik Chisholm to the staff of the College of Music as part-time singing teacher in February 1949 (Rennie 1982: 44) and was put in charge of the opera section in 1951 (Von Geysso 1962: 20). His repertoire as opera singer consisted of 38 roles in 34 operas. He became the Opera Manager of CAPAB in 1980 (Rennie 1982: 147) and died in Cape Town in 1986. Adelheid Armhold and Gregorio Fiasconaro can be seen as the supporting pillars on which Nellie du Toit’s career, especially that as opera singer, was founded.

The syllabus of the new course in opera performance at the College of Music included a full-time drama course at the Drama Department, with Rosalie van der Gucht and Leonard Schach as lecturers (Du Toit 2001a). In the latter course, the young Du Toit learned much about stage techniques and production (Du Toit 1964). In addition to the necessary fundamental theoretical subjects she had piano lessons with Phyllis Kemp and received tuition in Italian and French for the full duration of the course (Du Toit 1998).

### **First reviews**

Nellie du Toit’s first opera roles as a student were Dido in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Hero in Berlioz’ opera *Beatrice et Benedict*, in September 1950 (Programme 1950a). Prof. Erik Chisholm conducted the production by Hedy Faller-Plaut (Inskip 1972: 137).

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<sup>4</sup> Compare the biography on Gregorio Fiasconaro, *I’d do it again* (Rennie 1982).

The critic K.G. (1950) in the *Cape Argus* mentioned that Nellie du Toit's Dido had to be singled out and that "she made a genuinely moving thing of the beautiful lament". She was also seen as having "a charming voice of soubrette quality which she uses with a certain dramatic sense". In her first year Nellie du Toit also participated in two student concerts at Hiddingh Hall as well as a student concert in the university town of Stellenbosch, where she was to become lecturer in singing thirty years later and would be awarded an honorary doctorate in 1998.

Nellie du Toit's first press reviews were traced in her personal journal of press clippings<sup>5</sup>. Various reviews in this source establish the fact that she performed opera arias by Mozart and Puccini as well as lieder by Strauss at student concerts.

About the final 1950 students' concert in Hiddingh Hall, the press mentions Du Toit's "sweet soprano voice" and that "in Nellie du Toit we possess a singer from whom we may expect much in the future" (Unidentified author 1950a). Another unidentified newspaper clipping (Unidentified author 1950b) states that

*Nellie du Toit is a singer to be watched. She uses her sweet soprano easily and stylishly [and] has that priceless asset, charm. She does not yet possess all the vocal and dramatic power required for Puccini's Butterfly, but she captured the mood of 'Un bel di' and contrasted it with a lovely Mozart performance – 'Deh vieni' from Figaro.*

Her final performance as a first year student was a Sunday concert in the Cape Town City Hall, which she shared with a co-student, the mezzo-soprano Noreen Berry (Programme 1950b). The review by an unidentified author (1950c) in the *Cape Times* of 27 November 1950 praises both Du Toit and Noreen Berry for the beautiful quality of their voices and their musical phrasing and predicts a fine career for both of them. Obviously, Du Toit had made a positive impression, judging by the positive critiques. Her first year of study already augured favourably for Nellie du Toit to make a singing career.

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<sup>5</sup> It was given to her on her twenty-first birthday by her uncle Piet, and contains the following dedication in Afrikaans: "Aan Nellie op haar 21ste verjaarsdag. Mag hierdie boek gevul word met die verslae van jou sukses. Met die beste wense van Oom Piet. Pretoria, 17 Desember 1950." The first item in this journal is the programme of her debut in the school operetta *Prinses Pirliwinkie* in which she sang the principal role.



### **Vocal qualities**

Dr Du Toit (2001a) describes her voice in her youth as small and light: “ ’n Klein stemmetjie, ’n ligte stem”. The critics described her voice as “sweet”, “pure”, “soubrette”<sup>6</sup>, as “yet too light to do full justice to the drama of Butterfly”. They acknowledged her dramatic potentials however. Purcell’s Dido was an ideal role for introduction to the opera repertoire since it would not strain a young voice. Du Toit’s early attempts at the aria from *Madama Butterfly* were perhaps subconsciously a premonition that this role would become her hallmark.

### **Family support**

Coming from an Afrikaans cultural background, it was not easy for the young Nellie du Toit to adapt in an English-speaking environment far from home. She commented: “After six months I wanted to go home. I wasn’t fluent in English and just to learn the anatomy of the voice in English was a nightmare” (Du Toit 2001b).

It seems that strong bonding with the family back home played an important supportive role in her career. A telegram dated 14 September 1950, from her family (written in English), reads: “May your première astonish the opera world. Congratulations and best wishes for a brilliant career. Love. Pappa, Mamma and Marie” [*sic*]. Another, dated 17 September 1951, encourages her with the words (again written in English): “Sing yourself to fame. Good Luck. Love. Mamma and Pappa”. Indeed, all members of her family were her staunch supporters. Nellie du Toit’s sister, Marié Gaerdes, confirms that the whole family would make a point of attending any opening nights and concerts by her sister, wherever they could. When Marié Gaerdes later lived overseas her mother used to correspond with her regularly, reporting on the progress in her sister’s vocal career (Gaerdes 2001a).

## **2.2 SECOND YEAR AT THE COLLEGE OF MUSIC – 1951**

This year’s performances included a concert tour with fellow students, in February, of the Eastern Cape. Schubert’s *Mirjams Siegesgesang (The Song of Miriam)* Op. 136 in June, the operas *La serva padrona* and *Suor Angelica* in September and three concerts with orchestral accompaniment.

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<sup>6</sup> Used in opera to designate a light soprano comedienne, roles such as Serpina, Despina, Susanna (Warrack and West 1994: 669-670); equivalent to “Spielsopran”: “Zarte, biegsame Stimme, zierliche Erscheinung” (tender, pliable voice, dainty appearance) (Kloiber and Konold 1985: 1042).

From press clippings and programmes<sup>7</sup> it can be seen that Du Toit added arias by Mozart, Gluck, Puccini, Weber and Borodin to her repertoire that year, as well as duets by Brahms and lieder by Mozart, Schubert, Schumann and Wolf.

### **Eastern Cape Tour**

On invitation by the Federation of Music Societies of the Eastern Cape, Nellie du Toit, Noreen Berry (alto), Manuel Villet (piano) and Serah van Praag (violin) presented a concert tour of the Eastern Cape in February 1951. According to programmes and articles in Du Toit's press clippings book, six towns were visited: Port Elizabeth, East London, Cradock, King Williamstown, Queenstown and Umtata.

Du Toit's contributions were – amongst others – two arias from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*: Susanna's "Deh vieni", and Cherubino's aria "Non so più", as well as two Brahms duets and Cio-Cio-San's aria "Un bel dì" from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (Programme 1951a; Programme 1951b). An unidentified, undated newspaper clipping from an Eastern Province newspaper commented on her "gloriously rich soprano voice, well produced and well controlled" (Unidentified author 1951a).

### **Concerts**

At the third UCT<sup>8</sup> "Orchestral Concert" on 15 June 1951, Nellie du Toit sang in *The Song of Miriam* Op. 136 by Schubert, with Noreen Berry (contralto), Ian Smith (pianist) and Ernest Fleischmann conducting the University Orchestra (Programme 1951c).

On 7 September 1951 Du Toit performed two arias with orchestral accompaniment from the two Gluck operas *Il trionfo di Clelia* and *La rencontre imprévue* (*The Pilgrims of Mecca*), at the "UCT Arts Festival Concert" in Hiddingh Hall (Programme 1951d). In October, at the Final Quarterly Concert of the SACM<sup>9</sup>, she sang the aria "Leise, leise" from Weber's *Der Freischütz* (B.M. 1951b).

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<sup>7</sup>Programmes 1951a-f

<sup>8</sup>University of Cape Town

<sup>9</sup>South African College of Music

The year at college ended with a “Special Saturday Popular Concert” at the Cape Town City Hall on 8 and 15 December 1951. Nellie du Toit sang the Arioso and “Complainte de Jaroslavna” in excerpts from Borodin’s *Knyaz Igor (Prince Igor)* (sung in French), with Gregorio Fiasconaro and the EOAN Group<sup>10</sup> Choir. The well-known Enrique Jorda (Programme 1951e) conducted the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. Reviewing this concert, the *Cape Times*’ music critic, B.M. (1951c) (probably Beatrice Marx)<sup>11</sup>, mentions that Nellie du Toit has “undoubted temperament and a voice of pure soprano quality which is enhanced by perfect intonation”. She also points out that the middle register was not yet fully balanced and concludes that if Du Toit “has the will and wish to overcome the obstacles that lie in the path of ambition, she will be well equipped for a brilliant career”.

An unidentified author (1951b) in a Portuguese newspaper announced a performance by Nellie du Toit on the Radio Club of Mozambique Radio Station. In this programme she accompanied herself at the piano in Arditi’s waltz “Parla”, Puccini’s “O mio babbino caro” (*Gianni Schicchi*), “Sì, mi chiamano Mimi” (*La bohème*), “Un bel di” (*Madama Butterfly*). Another article (Unidentified author 1951c), also in Portuguese, mentions that Du Toit received the second prize in an amateur competition in the Pavillion of Praia for singing an aria from *Madama Butterfly* in which she accompanied herself on the piano. (Her sister, the eleven-year-old Marié du Toit came first in the competition, performing a ballet number.) Dr Du Toit (2001) recalls that her family often spent their holidays in Mozambique and that she probably made recordings for the Radio Club of Mozambique on these occasions.

During her period of study at UCT Nellie du Toit also made her first broadcasts with the SABC for the series “Koffiehuiskonserte” which were often recorded live in Cape Town. Ian Smith (2001) reminisces that Pieter de Waal presented these popular concerts in the 1940’s and 1950’s in the Koffiehuis Restaurant in Cape Town’s Groote Kerk Building. They consisted of casual broadcasts presented weekly on Saturdays and were sometimes presented from other towns. He remembers travelling with Du Toit to a Ceres Koffiehuiskonsert where he accompanied her in the Afrikaans song “Kokkewiet” by Petrus Lemmer.

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<sup>10</sup> Derived from the Greek “eos”, meaning daybreak. This group, founded in 1933 by Helen Southern-Holt, developed into one of South Africa’s most important cultural and charity organisations for the Coloured community (Manca 1982: 18-21).

<sup>11</sup> Music critic of the *Cape Times* from 1939-1965 (Malan [ed.] 1984f: 234-235). See anecdote in the book *The Cape Times – an informal history* (Shaw 1999: 146-147).

## Opera performances

Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* were premièred at the Little Theatre in Cape Town on 17 September 1951. Nellie du Toit sang the roles of Serpina and Suor Angelica, alternating with Désirée Talbot in *Suor Angelica*. The critic B.M. comments about the purity and sweetness of Du Toit's fresh soprano, as well as the charm with which she sustained her part. She also comments about Nellie du Toit's portrayal of the title role of Suor Angelica in which she "revealed totally unexpected powers, vocally and histrionically [...] Her voice, light and gay in the previous opera took on a remarkable fullness of tone, and her acting in the final scene sounded depths of real tragedy" (B.M. 1951a).

Ian Smith (2001) remembers this performance which, according to him, "put Nellie du Toit on the map" and was "sensational". He furthermore remembers that "all were aghast with this wonderful voice that had arrived in Cape Town". Smith then already thought that he would love to hear her in *Madama Butterfly*.

These two operas were the first that were produced by Gregorio Fiasconaro at the College of Music. Inskip (1972: 67) mentions that Fiasconaro's "expert staging of *Sister Angelica* and *La serva padrona* already held out the promise of what was to follow...and one can already sense that the opera is beginning to tread a path not dissimilar to that of the ballet". In those years UCT was already famous for its Ballet School. Fiasconaro describes this very first attempt at opera production in his biography (Rennie 1982: 62). He considered himself at that stage of his career a "complete greenhorn" and narrates as follows:

*During my formative years in Italy before the war, producers were practically non-existent and staging of operas were always the same wherever one went [...] Confronted by Suor Angelica and La Serva Padrona my training insisted "Stand still" but my instinct rebelled and I actually tried to make the students move [...] In Serva I gave Nellie fixed moves but allowed myself to do something different at each performance. Poor Nellie, she never knew where I was going to pop up next!*

Dr Du Toit (2001a)<sup>12</sup> commented about her work with Fiasconaro that all his productions were in Italian. His approach was always very practical, but he could be rather impatient and temperamental. She described Fiasconaro as a natural talent, dedicated on stage with respect to work. He chose operas for which he had the suitable cast.

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<sup>12</sup> "Hy het al die produksies gedoen, in Italiaans. Sy benadering was baie prakties. Hy was nie baie geduldig nie en was ook baie temperamentvol. Hy was 'n 'natural', toegewy op die verhoog wat werk betref. Hy het die operas gekies waarvoor hy gepaste rolbesettings gehad het."

### 2.3 THIRD YEAR AT THE COLLEGE OF MUSIC – 1952

The year 1952 was a year of anniversaries. The “Van Riebeeck Festival” in Cape Town marked the tercentenary of Jan van Riebeeck’s landing in South Africa. In the same year, the Little Theatre, which had been founded in 1931, celebrated its “coming of age”. Furthermore, the UCT Opera School was officially established with Gregorio Fiasconaro as its Director. It was a year of non-stop activity for the Opera Department. It was also Nellie du Toit’s last year at the College of Music.

#### **Opera performances**

The year was dominated by opera performances. Désirée Talbot gives an account of these events in her book *For the love of singing* (Talbot 1978: 33-37, 159-160). In April 1952 there were eight performances of Menotti’s *The Telephone* and *The Medium*, the first South African performance of these operas. Nellie du Toit portrayed the role of Monica in *The Medium*. A tour of the Eastern Province followed with *The Telephone*, *The Medium* and *Suor Angelica*, in which Du Toit sang the leading roles, and *La serva padrona* in which she sang the role of Serpina (Programme 1952d). The towns visited were Port Elizabeth, King Williamstown, Umtata, Queenstown and Grahamstown. There were fourteen performances and, according to Talbot (1978: 35), on four occasions the singers sang a matinée followed by an evening performance. This must have been quite taxing on the voice.

The Port Elizabeth critic E.B.J. (1952) was of the opinion that Nellie du Toit “disclosed a voice of excellent quality”, described as “fresh” and “vibrant”, that she was a real find for opera in South Africa with outstanding operatic potential. “She acted with sureness and sense of theatre which gave an exciting indication of her potentialities.” It also appeared as if “some of her tones were [still] inclined to spread under pressure. Given opportunity and careful coaching, she should establish a considerable reputation.”

The critic A.G.K. (1952) praised the versatility of her talent in the comic as well as the dramatic genre of opera, notably her facial expressions.

An unidentified critic in a clipping from possibly Port Elizabeth’s *Eastern Province Herald* singles out Fiasconaro and Nellie du Toit.

The reviewer also felt that Du Toit's "beautiful, fine-ranged soprano" had developed considerably since she was heard the previous year. Special mention is made of her "most exquisite" pianissimo singing (Unidentified author 1952b).

When the tour returned to Cape Town, Menotti's *The Telephone* and *The Medium* were performed in the Memorial Theatre at Rondebosch Boys' High School on 5 June 1952 and then taken to Paarl, Stellenbosch and Worcester in June. On 20 June *La serva padrona* was performed in Hiddingh Hall, Cape Town, with Du Toit as Serpina. In August 1952 *Suor Angelica* and *La serva padrona* were presented in the Stellenbosch Town Hall. Immediately afterwards rehearsals started for *Gianni Schicchi* with Du Toit as Lauretta. There were eight performances at the Little Theatre in Cape Town in October, presented in a double bill with Prof. Chisholm's *Dark Sonnet*. These were staged at Stellenbosch on 29 October 1952 and at Rondebosch Boys' High School on 31 October.

This demonstrates that, already as a student, Nellie du Toit had a very full performing schedule. In 1952 alone she sang four leading opera roles, and had performed in about forty operatic presentations. This is quite a substantial amount for a student. It certainly helped to condition her voice, mind and body for working under taxing conditions, which also included the learning of new parts simultaneous with rehearsing and performing.

### **Concerts and oratorio performances**

In February 1952 Nellie du Toit gave concerts in Tzaneen and Pietersburg – in what was then known as the Northern Transvaal – where her aunts lived. Ian Smith accompanied her at the piano. An unidentified author (1952a) comments on her performance in Pietersburg.

*Miss du Toit gives every promise of a brilliant career [...] The most striking qualities displayed [...] were her natural gift for pianissimo singing, particularly effective in Mozart, her general musicianship and fine sense of style which lent such contrast and variety to the program. Also most impressive was the dramatic attack in the Puccini arias.*

The Van Riebeeck Festival celebrations took place in Cape Town from 4 March to 1 April 1952. It was to be moulded on the standards of European music festivals and was to be the biggest ever held in South Africa.

The well-known German conductor Hans Rosbaud was invited and artists performing at the festival included the violinist Szymon Goldberg and established South African singers such as the dramatic soprano Cecilia Wessels<sup>13</sup> and the mezzo-soprano Betsy de la Porte.

On two occasions the young Du Toit contributed to the musical festival. She was one of the soloists in the “First Historical Concert” in Hiddingh Hall on 6 March 1952, when excerpts from Purcell’s *King Arthur* were performed as well as Bach’s “Coffee Cantata”. Erik Chisholm conducted the Cape Town University Orchestra and the Cape Town Philharmonic Choir (Programme 1952b).

Du Toit (2001a) experienced it as a special honour to be chosen as soprano soloist in Mahler’s Fourth Symphony which was performed on 27 March 1952 (Programme 1952a). Frits Schuurman conducted the Johannesburg Symphony orchestra of 110 players. The music critic Beatrice Marx of the *Cape Times* mentioned that Du Toit’s charming voice and her perfect composure delighted the audience and that she acquitted herself with genuine distinction. Her future career would be watched with interest (B.M. 1952). “The Music Critic” of the *Cape Argus* was of the opinion that “Mahler himself would have smiled his happy approval” concerning Du Toit’s soprano solo (The Music Critic 1952a).

In 1952 Du Toit performed Handel’s oratorio, *Messiah*, twice: on 11 April 1952 in the Metropolitan Church, Greenmarket Square, with Leslie Arnold as organist (Programme 1952c) and on 22 December 1952, when the other soloists were Noreen Berry (alto), Ernest Dennis (tenor) and Gregorio Fiasconaro (baritone). Enrique Jorda conducted the Cape Town Orchestra. “The Music Critic” (1952b) of the *Cape Argus* stated that the soprano and alto were not yet quite at home with oratorio, but had done much that was praiseworthy. The critic could “overlook many faults for the sake of such lovely singing as Miss du Toit gave us in the opening phrase of ‘Come unto me [*sic*] [Him]’ and at the finish of ‘I know [that my Redeemer liveth]’ ”.

### **Summary of vocal progress**

In the three years of study at the College of Music, Du Toit built up a considerable opera repertoire ranging from Purcell and Pergolesi to Berlioz, Menotti and two operas by Puccini.

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<sup>13</sup> Cecilia Wessels (1895-1970). Born in Bloemfontein she studied at the SACM in Cape Town and in London. She had an extensive concert and opera career in England. From 1938 she focussed on her career in South Africa where she gradually became a national figure and almost a legendary singer (Malan 1986b: 493-495).

She performed arias by Gluck, Mozart and Weber and her oratorio and concert repertoire encompassed Handel, Bach, Schubert and Mahler. She regularly studied lieder with Madame Armhold.

Her lieder repertoire, according to press reviews, at that stage comprised Strauss, Mahler and Brahms, but in fact covered a much wider repertoire. She also had a couple of Afrikaans songs in her repertoire, which she sang for fun. However, she did not perform lieder in public as frequently as opera because her studies were mainly concentrated on opera (Du Toit 2001b).

Du Toit's voice, initially described by the critics as a "sweet soprano", "pure", "soubrette", "yet too light" [for the drama of *Madama Butterfly*] soon was praised for its "remarkable fullness of tone", a "gloriously rich soprano", having an "uncommon beauty of tone" and "exquisite pianissimos". However, it was said that "her tones were inclined to spread under pressure" and it seemed as though her middle register was not yet fully balanced. The overall evaluation of the critics was extremely positive. With her "outstanding dramatic ability" and "pleasing stage presence" they judged her "well equipped for a brilliant career" and "a great future" was predicted for her. In December 1952 Nellie du Toit graduated with flying colours, as reported by the Cape Times University Correspondent (1952):

*The first two students ever to obtain the Performers' [sic] Certificate in opera are Miss Nellie du Toit and Miss Jeanette Schatz, who are also among to-day's graduates. It is a three-year course and they are the only two students who have completed it since it was instituted. Nellie du Toit passed with distinction.*

### **Summary of operatic roles**

During her three years at the College of Music Du Toit had performed the following roles in six operas:

1950: Dido – *Dido and Aeneas* (Purcell); Hero – *Beatrice et Benedict* (Berlioz);

1951: Serpina – *La serva padrona* (Pergolesi); Suor Angelica – *Suor Angelica* (Puccini);

1952: Monica – *The Medium* (Menotti); Lauretta – *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini).



## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY PROFESSIONAL YEARS: 1953–1956

For Nellie du Toit 1953 and 1954 were years of opera and concert tours. She toured Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) with the Opera Group from the College of Music in February 1953. An extensive tour of England, Scotland and Wales with the British Arts Council's "Grand Opera Group" followed between November 1953 and April 1954. In South Africa she went on a countrywide tour with the German tenor Marcel Wittrisch in September/October 1954.

Du Toit also passed the University of South Africa's Performer's Licentiate in singing with great success in 1954, winning the UNISA overseas bursary, which gave her the opportunity for further studies in Vienna in the second half of 1955. Furthermore she started recording for the SABC and performed frequently in orchestral concerts, recitals and oratorio. However, there were no opportunities for her to perform in opera in South Africa.

Two decisive happenings in her burgeoning career occurred on the "home front": her marriage to Philip Crouse in July 1955 and the birth of their first daughter, Christine, in August 1956. This indicated the way for her future career, which thenceforth was to develop solely in South Africa.

#### 3.1 TOUR OF RHODESIA: 1953

The initiative of Prof. Erik Chisholm of the SACM together with the Rhodesian Music Societies made it possible for the UCT Opera Company, as it was now known, to undertake a tour of Southern Rhodesia between 4 and 21 February 1953. There were eighteen performances in four towns: Umtali, Salisbury, Gwelo and Bulawayo. Five operas were performed, in all of which Nellie du Toit sang the leading role: Laretta in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Serpina in Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* and Susanna in Wolf-Ferrari's *Il segreto di Susanna*. In Menotti's double-bill *The Telephone* and *The Medium* she sang Lucy and Monica respectively (Programme 1953).

Her co-artists were, among others, Noreen Berry, Jeanette Schatz, Ernest Dennis and producer Gregorio Fiasconaro. Prof. Erik Chisholm conducted a small orchestral ensemble. Désirée Talbot comments that "everyone sang almost every night.

It was tough but wonderful training because you simply had to learn a superb technique on which you could rely come hell or high water” (Talbot 1978: 37-38). Nellie du Toit experienced the tour as “hot and stressful” (Du Toit 2001c).

Again the press spoke highly about Du Toit’s performances and of the productions in general. The critic T.Y.L. (1953) of the *Umtali Post* comments on her fine soprano voice of great sweetness and power and said that she showed versatility as an actress. He furthermore mentioned her beautiful upper register and the joy of listening to her pianissimo passages. For the critic N.C. (1953) from the *Umtali Post* Du Toit once more was “her usual commendable best”. She showed her customary technical skill, and “her voice spun a pattern of lyrical charm that would be difficult for any critic to unravel”. The Salisbury critic M.B.C. (1953) comments on her charming performance and the remarkable power of her voice. He classified her acting as first rate. Patrick Quirke (1953) also mentions Nellie du Toit’s beautiful voice and that she sang with artistry and feeling.

### **3.2 GREAT BRITAIN: 1953–1954**

After her return from Rhodesia, Du Toit prepared for her trip to England where she planned to further her studies in singing. The fact that few opportunities were available in South Africa for young musicians except in teaching, made Du Toit opt for broadening her experience overseas where she would be exposed to healthy competition and would have to work hard to prove her abilities. To achieve this goal, auditions were unavoidable (Bender 1954).

On 8 March 1953, shortly before leaving South Africa, Du Toit gave a recital in Pretoria of a selection of lieder and operatic arias. Judith Brent-Wessels accompanied her on the piano (Alexina 1953). On 15 March 1953 Nellie du Toit boarded the “Zuiderkruis” in Cape Town on her way to England (Talbot 1978: 38)<sup>1</sup>. Since she did not have a bursary she practically went “on her own steam” and left with one hundred pounds in her pocket. Her parents also supported her (Du Toit 2001a).

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<sup>1</sup> A dinner Menu from the Zuiderkruis, dated 31 March and signed by passengers wishing her well, possibly indicates the last day on board.

### **New singing teacher, auditions and competition**

On her arrival in London Du Toit immediately had to seek employment other than singing to earn a living and subsequently for six months worked for *The Reader's Digest*. In the meantime, the South African soprano Emma Renzi<sup>2</sup> introduced Du Toit to the Russian soprano Oda Slobotskaya who in turn introduced Du Toit to another Russian singer, Tatiana Makushina, who worked with Du Toit on repertoire and roles. Du Toit was also coached by Geoffrey Parsons and by Bryan Balkwill, *répétiteur* and associate conductor from Glyndebourne (Du Toit 2001c). In this period Du Toit auditioned for the Arts Council of Great Britain<sup>3</sup>. She was accepted as first lyrical soprano in the newly formed “Grand Opera Group” of the Arts Council of Great Britain, whose tours of England, Scotland and Wales would commence in November 1953. Du Toit was to sing the roles of Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Clorinda in Rossini's *La cenerentola* (Unidentified author 1953a).

While in England, Du Toit took the opportunity to participate in an international singing competition in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1953. This effort was a golden opportunity to compare herself with other young singers. However, she did not make it into the final rounds. While in Switzerland she also auditioned for the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler in Zurich (Du Toit 2002d).

### **South African fellow students**

In London Du Toit at first lived at No. 36 Queensborough Terrace, Bayswater Road<sup>4</sup>. She shared lodgings with fellow South Africans, the pianists Laura Searle and Ian Smith who would be her piano accompanists in certain stages of her singing career (Du Toit 2001c). Later Nellie du Toit shared a house with Noreen Berry at No. 9 Hammersmith Terrace, a house equipped with two grand pianos. The actor Michael Redgrave also lived in the same street which overlooked the Thames (Du Toit 2001b). The South African composer Hubert du Plessis, who was studying with the composer and pianist Howard Ferguson at that time, also met Du Toit at Ferguson's home in London (Du Plessis 2001).

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix X.

<sup>3</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain is an organization incorporated in the Royal Charter in 1948 to take the place of the wartime Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts and to administer the subsidies granted by the state to artistic enterprises (Raynor 1980: 646).

<sup>4</sup> Now the Byron Hotel, 36/38 Queensborough Terrace. The composer Sir William Sterndale Bennet (1816-1875) lived there (Byron Hotel Brochure 2001).

During that time Du Toit made the acquaintance of the South African pianist Hennie Joubert<sup>5</sup>, who had come to London from South Africa in the middle of 1953 to further his piano studies. This is when their close musical collaboration started. When he was rehearsing his piano concertos, Nellie du Toit would play the accompanying orchestral part on the piano (Du Toit 1998). He in turn accompanied her when she needed a pianist for auditions. Joubert would later become Du Toit's long-standing and much valued accompanist. In fact, according to Jacobs (1994: 3-4), meeting and accompanying Nellie du Toit laid the seeds for his decision to become an accompanist.

Du Toit's versatility at the piano stood her in good stead, as she could study all her repertoire by herself without the need of a coach. Furthermore, the ability to accompany her singing students in the teaching studio would, in later years, become an invaluable asset.

### **Opera tour**

Nellie du Toit's six-month tour contract (Du Toit 2001a) with the "Grand Opera Group" of the British Arts Council stretched from November 1953 to April 1954. It commenced with a fourteen-week tour of England, Scotland and Wales in the fall of 1953. According to an article by Anna Bender in *Rooi Rose* of December 1955, Du Toit on these tours performed about five evenings per week in about sixty different towns.

The tour programme consisted of extracts (arias, duets and ensembles) from various operas sung to piano accompaniment. The Australian pianist Geoffrey Parsons, was the accompanist and Bryan Balkwill acted as second coach and accompanist<sup>6</sup>. Du Toit's singing colleagues on this tour included the mezzo-soprano Patricia Kern, (the sister of Terence Kern, who would later become a conductor in South Africa) and the tenor Dermot Troy.

From a few newspaper clippings in Du Toit's journal of press clippings, it can be seen that the company performed all over Great Britain in excerpts from favourite operas such as Puccini's *La bohème*, *Madama Butterfly* and Verdi's *Il trovatore*.

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<sup>5</sup> Hendrik Johannes (Hennie) Joubert (1926-1986) studied music, with piano and organ, at the University of Stellenbosch. He continued his studies in Zurich (1947-1951) and London (1953-1954). Joubert lectured at the Universities of Potchefstroom and Stellenbosch (1951-1953), was Head of the Dutch Reformed Church Music School in Heidelberg (Transvaal) and vice-director of the Pretoria Conservatoire of Music from 1960 to 1964. He then became piano lecturer at the Academy of Music of the University of Pretoria. An examiner for UNISA since 1959, he became Director of Music Exams at UNISA in 1967, a post which he held until his death at the age of sixty in a motor accident. Apart from performing as piano and organ soloist he specialised as accompanist, working with South African singers such as Mimi Coertse, Hanlie van Niekerk, Emma Renzi, Joyce Barker as well as singers from abroad. He was music critic for the Pretoria daily *Hoofstad* after 1967 (Malan [ed.] 1984a: 58-60).

<sup>6</sup> Balkwill later became resident conductor at Covent Garden (Goodwin 1980: 248).

According to *The Berwick Journal* (Unidentified author 1953b) there were also ensembles by Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini and Smetana, all acted in costume. Du Toit also sang the role of Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and the role of Clorinda in Rossini's *La cenerentola*. In general, this opera tour was met with much acclaim from the critics.

Nellie du Toit's last concert in Great Britain must have been in early April 1954. A programme of sports and entertainment from the Carnarvon Castle (voyage No. 135) from Southampton to Cape Town, dated 15 April 1954, indicated Nellie du Toit's return to South Africa around that time after a sojourn of over a year in England. The reason for her return to her fatherland was that she didn't consider making a career in England and had no financial backing for a longer stay.

### **3.3 BACK IN SOUTH-AFRICA: 1954**

After an absence of about thirteen months from South Africa, Du Toit, now 24 years old, made her debut in Durban with the Durban Civic Orchestra under Edward Dunn. This "Command Performance" Concert for the Durban Centenary celebrations took place on Thursday 15 July 1954. A reviewer in the *Natal Daily News* (Unidentified author 1954a) describes Du Toit's "Signore ascolta" as "thrilling". The critic "Baton" (1954a) praised her "fine singing at Command Concert" where she proved her dramatic talent with arias from Mozart and Gluck. He described her "vibrant intensity and cultured restraint" as "conspicuous" and concludes that:

*It is a very long time since South Africa has been able to claim a singer of such quality as Nellie du Toit of Pretoria. She is the possessor of an excellent timbre. But what is more important, there is behind it a musical intelligence and an interpretive ability that adds immeasurably to the ease, warmth and sensitiveness of her artistry.*

The following Sunday, 18 July 1954, Du Toit and the South African pianist Adelaide Newman gave a joint recital. Constance Brothwood accompanied Du Toit on the piano. Her programme included the following lieder: "Abendempfindung", "An Chloë" and "Das Veilchen" by Mozart, "Immer leiser" and "Vergebliches Ständchen" by Brahms, "Ich ging mit Lust", "Hans und Grete", "Scheiden und Meiden" by Mahler, and Strauss' "Wiegenlied" and "Ständchen" as well as Dvořák's *Zigeunerlieder* (Programme 1954a). "Baton" (1954b) commented:

*Nellie du Toit's work is always interesting for her instinctive sense of the musical requirements, but last night she showed herself much more temperamentally fitted for the strong contrasts in Mozart's "Das Veilchen" and Mahler's "Scheiden und Meiden", than for the more tender refinements of some of her other offerings.*

J.M. (1954) found Du Toit “a most accomplished musical artist with great potentialities”. He wrote that “her smooth even line and effortless delivery reminds one, if not as yet with equal force, of Irmgard Seefried’s stylish interpretations”. The critic EVE (1954) singled out “the dramatic [*sic*] soprano” - Du Toit - in the “Command Performance” and concluded that “South Africa has not been able for a very long time to claim an artist of such quality. A South African artist with a most promising future”.

### **Tour with Marcel Wittrisch**

In 1954 the African Music and Theatre Association presented a tour of the famous German tenor Marcel Wittrisch, sponsored by the Rembrandt Group. Nellie du Toit was invited to participate since Wittrisch requested a singer to share the programme with him (Du Toit 2001a). Marcel Wittrisch (1903-1955) was a tenor of Belgian origin who studied singing in Munich, Leipzig and Milan. Before the Second World War he had sung tenor roles (from Tamino to Lohengrin) at the Berlin State Opera. Thereafter he did operetta singing and concert work (Herzfeld [ed.] 1965: 614).

This tour would be an ideal opportunity to introduce Du Toit to audiences throughout the Union of South Africa. Albie Louw<sup>7</sup> was the accompanist. The artists performed in seventeen South African towns and cities in September and October of 1954: Rustenburg, Potchefstroom, Potgietersrust, Standerton, Krugersdorp, Pretoria, Heidelberg, Bethlehem, Kroonstad, Cradock, Graaff-Reinet, Lydenburg, Port Elizabeth, Robertson, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Goodwood and Cape Town (Programme 1954b).

The chosen programme gave equal opportunities to both singers. Du Toit performed three Mozart songs and three Puccini arias, from *La bohème*, *Turandot* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Her contribution in the operetta genre were “Mein Herr Marquis” from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss and the “Vilja Lied” from *Die lustige Witwe* by Lehár. With Wittrisch, (an operetta expert) she also sang two duets from Lehár operettas.

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<sup>7</sup> Albertus Johannes (Albie) Louw, a versatile musician and composer of light music, was born in 1926 near Malmesbury. He studied singing and piano at the University of Stellenbosch and the SACM. He was a member of the University’s opera group until 1971 and sang in operas and concert tours for the Provincial Arts Councils. Appearing occasionally as concert pianist, his main interest was the light music repertoire, especially in the broadcasting medium. His “Albie Louw Salon Orchestra”, and the “Safari Singers” were well known. He also orchestrated and conducted musicals, collaborated with Gé Korsten and taught piano and singing in his studio in Cape Town (Malan [ed.] 1984e: 199-201).

Besides the plaudits for the famous and experienced Wittrisch, who was the focus of attraction, the twenty-four year old Nellie du Toit received positive assessment and some benign criticism. W.H.G. (1954) remarked that she was not yet as polished in her artistry as Wittrisch was, but assumed that she would still go far. Oliver Walker (1954), the well-known and “feared” critic of Johannesburg’s *The Star*, thought her voice had an “excellent range” and that she had “considerable lyrical charm”. However, he argued that she should cultivate her middle register as well as her style in lieder interpretation. Walker criticized her for sometimes “switching the volume of tone off and on like an electric light” which he thought ruined the ending of the *Turandot* aria and destroyed the serenity of the Mozart song “Das Veilchen”.

The critic D.L.S. (1954) of the *Daily Mail* praised Du Toit’s “high placed soprano” which was “quite engaging when she did not scoop beyond the needs of portamento”. According to an unidentified author (1954b) of *Die Transvaler* of 9 September 1954, Wittrisch was received with enthusiasm. This critic thought that Du Toit’s pure, beautiful voice would probably bud and develop in the coming years. He also found that the voices of the two singers blended well. *Die Transvaler* of 23 September 1954 (Unidentified author 1954c) reported that both singers were drawing large audiences in rural areas and that Nellie du Toit’s outstanding voice caused a sensation wherever she appeared. To have been chosen at the age of twenty-four as a vocal partner for someone of Wittrisch’s standing, therefore was not only an honour but also an excellent opportunity for wider public exposure and further artistic growth.

After the tour with Wittrisch, Du Toit sang in a diversity of concerts. These included a recital in Pietersburg (Programme 1954c) and a celebration of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands’ visit to South Africa, according to an unidentified author in a Pietersburg newspaper, the *Zoutpansberg Review*, of 26 November 1954. Du Toit also sang in an “Elizabethan Evening” for the Intimate Theatre Club, Durban, on 19 December 1954 (Programme 1954d). The *Natal Daily News* of 20 December 1954 hailed her as a “fine dramatic [*sic*] soprano”. The unidentified critic thought that Verdi’s approach to Shakespeare suited Du Toit better than Quilter’s did. The two arias from *Otello* “displayed a prodigious dynamic range”. But for this critic the Quilter songs lacked simplicity.

The year ended on a high note for Du Toit when she made her debut in Pietermaritzburg in Händel’s *Messiah*. It was performed on 20 December, a few days after her twenty-fifth birthday (Programme 1954e). The critic “Allegro” (1954) comments:

*Nellie du Toit is a singer of whom South Africans may be proud. She has a fine voice and an exceedingly good technique, her soft singing being flawlessly beautiful. I should like to hear Miss du Toit in Grand Opera, in which I am sure she has a great future.*

### **SABC Recordings**

Anna Bender, who became the official accompanist of the SABC in 1950, writes that Du Toit auditioned for the SABC in Johannesburg about the middle of 1954, thus before the Witttrisch tour. Bender had not come across Du Toit's name previously and was pleasantly surprised on hearing her voice for the first time. Although fairly well known to Cape audiences, Du Toit was at that stage not so well known in the Transvaal, owing to the vastness of the country.

After her radio audition she immediately received broadcasting opportunities which introduced her to a broader audience (Bender 1954). In an interview Bender (2001) talked about her collaboration with Nellie du Toit in numerous broadcasts. Their last recordings together were in 1963. She found Du Toit's vast repertoire most stimulating. It comprised German lieder by Schubert, Schumann, Strauss and Mahler as well as songs by Rachmaninov. Du Toit used to broadcast once a month (as did several other singers) but, according to Bender, Nellie du Toit carried off the laurels.

Bender did not find Du Toit to be a "person of many words". But regarding Du Toit's vocal capacities, Anna Bender thought that she was on a par with South African soprano Saline Koch, who was sought after in the forties and fifties at the SABC and in the opera world. Bender considered Nellie du Toit to be Koch's successor (Bender s.a.: 124-125).

Nellie du Toit received a remuneration of £22 and only needed two to three rehearsals before a recording. (In comparison Anna Bender's remuneration was £54 per month for accompanying twelve recitals a week in direct broadcasts.) Anna Bender described Nellie du Toit's "God given" voice as "ringing, sweet-sounding, clear as a bell", (in Afrikaans: "trillend, luidend, klokhelder,") and comparable to the voice of Anneliese Rothenberger<sup>8</sup>. Du Toit's musicality and artistic temperament gave Bender "goose pimples".

Clippings from the *SABC Radio Bulletin*, in Du Toit's journal of press clippings, give an impression of her broadcasting activities in 1954.

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<sup>8</sup> German soprano born 1924. Sang roles such as Constanze, Pamina, Sophie. An excellent actress, with a firm, light tone (Warrack and West 1994: 615).



Recordings Du Toit made the previous year, before her stay in Great Britain, were broadcast on 2 January with a Sunday evening recital on the Afrikaans station in which she sang the Schubert “Mignon Lieder” as well as lieder by Hugo Wolf and Rachmaninov. Du Toit was heard again on 11 and 27 January 1954 in the programme “Donderdagaandsolis”. On 14 July 1954 she was heard in the programme “Midweek Concert” and on 27 July 1954 in a broadcast she was accompanied by Constance Brothwood. Another broadcast entitled “Uit die Operas” (From the operas) took place on 14 August 1954. In this programme Du Toit sang arias from Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, Micaëla’s aria from *Carmen* as well as Nedda’s aria from *I pagliacci* by Leoncavallo. She was accompanied by the Concert Orchestra of the SABC, conducted by Jeremy Schulman. On 16 September 1954 she was again heard in the programme “Donderdagaandsolis”.

### **UNISA Licentiate and Bursary**

In the meantime Du Toit took singing lessons with Otto Albrecht Lewald, a well known Pretoria singing teacher, under whose guidance she prepared for her UNISA Performer’s Licentiate (Malan 1984: 182). Certainly the most deserved reward for Nellie du Toit’s outstanding achievements so far, and for her vocal abilities, intelligence and musicianship, was her winning the UNISA overseas scholarship worth £750 at the end of 1954. This would enable her to study overseas for a period of two years. The goal for 1955 was set: studies in Vienna with Maria Hittorff.

Since the South African coloratura soprano Mimi Coertse<sup>9</sup> had started studying with Hittorff – on recommendation of Anton Hartman and Jossie Boshoff<sup>10</sup>, who had studied with Hittorff – most South African singers opted to go to her. Besides, many musicians regarded Vienna as the musical capital of the world.

### **3.2 MARRIAGE AND VIENNA: 1955**

The year 1955 was to become a turning point in Nellie du Toit’s career, with her aim set on further studies in Vienna. The chances of a career abroad did not seem unlikely. Du Toit had by then had experience in singing with orchestra: in oratorio, concert repertoire as well as opera.

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix X.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix X.

Her recitals showed substantial variety and she was keen on presenting a new repertoire whenever possible. The tour of the Union of South Africa with Marcel Wittrisch had put her name on the map with South African audiences, not only in the main cities but also in rural areas. She was also introduced to South African audiences via regular broadcasts of live and studio recordings. Soon Nellie du Toit became a well-known name among music enthusiasts throughout the country. Yet, she had to accumulate sufficient additional funds for her stay overseas. That meant a busy concert schedule for 1955. The only thing she had not reckoned with, was “amor”, who had slipped out of her songs and arias into her life. And “love was here to stay” and would make her stay not in Europe but in South Africa. This would influence her decision to live and sing permanently in South Africa.

Du Toit met her would-be husband, Philip Crouse, on a “blind date” in Pretoria early in 1955. He hailed from Pietermaritzburg where he had been born in 1927, the son of Mr and Mrs G.M. Crouse. When Philip Crouse and Nellie du Toit met, he was lecturing at the Technical College in Pietermaritzburg and was also organist at the Voortrekkerkerk, Pietermaritzburg. He was not only a good organist, but also had a fine light baritone voice for which he was well-known in musical circles in Natal.

The months preceding their wedding were packed with concerts to augment Du Toit’s scholarship. February and March saw her perform with the Civic Orchestra in the Durban City Hall, with William Pickerill conducting. On 24 March 1955 she sang Mozart arias, among them Pamina’s aria from *Die Zauberflöte*. “L’Allegro” (1955a) in the *Daily News* of 25 March 1955, remarked on her “authoritative interpretation of Mozart”. He was sure that Du Toit was a singer who would emerge as an operatic soprano equal to the best that South Africa has produced. “Baton” (1955a) from the *Natal Mercury* stated that “her fresh pure voice, of lyrical quality, is always a pleasure to listen to” and that “she sings with ease and with a neat sense of musical values”.

Du Toit sang Tatjana’s “Letter Scene” from Tchaikovsky’s *Evgeny Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*), on 27 March 1955, again with Pickerill conducting the Durban Civic Orchestra. “Baton” (1955b) thought that her performance of the “trying and emotional excerpt did her the greatest credit”. “L’Allegro” (1955b) praised it as “an illuminating performance”.

On 4 April 1955 Du Toit, accompanied by Marion Robinson, gave a recital at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall, which included Haydn songs and opera arias by Mozart. This was part of her tour of Natal, where she performed in twenty centres, about three times a week, as can be deduced from a newspaper clipping from the *Eastern Province Herald* of 28 June 1955. In May she performed with the Iscor Orchestra under Joseph Traunek (Programme 1955a) at the Pretorius Hall in Pretoria, singing Puccini arias as well as Verdi's "Ave Maria" from *Otello*. The choice of her arias in these concerts shows that her voice, well versed in the lyrical approach to Mozart, was acquiring more dramatic qualities.

June saw her perform Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* in Johannesburg with the SABC Concert Orchestra conducted by Anton Hartman and soloists Gert Potgieter and Nanda Chiesa (Unidentified author 1955). This was followed by a shared recital with Walter Dignas at the Port Elizabeth City Hall on 28 June 1955 in which Robert Selley accompanied her in songs by Purcell, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Wolf, as well as two arias by Puccini, and Verdi's "Ave Maria" from *Otello* (Programme 1955b). The critic E.B.J. (1955) gave a rather direct assessment, saying that Du Toit could become a distinguished singer in the future with hard work and experience. He thought her (at that stage) "greater in promise than in performance and being an intelligent singer, it would be important for her to shed some old mistakes". He continued:

*I pitch into Miss du Toit solely because she is well worth any critic's attention, for she has one of the finest natural voices in South Africa. Unfortunately, she displays only intermittent skill in using this fine voice. Her vocal method is not of the safest, and she is inclined to force many of her high notes.[...] There is the spoiling of a really magnificent soprano in this young South African artist, and it is to be hoped she will find the guidance that will enable her to realise her undoubted potentialities. Many singers with fewer natural attributes have reached the highlights, and Miss du Toit will do much if she shuns the seductive illusion that nothing much remains for her to do.*

Nellie du Toit and Philip Crouse were married on 23 July 1955 in the Dutch Reformed Church in Bosman Street, Pretoria. Her last concert before leaving for Vienna in August was in Vereniging. Philip Crouse was to join his wife in Vienna a few months later.

### **Viennese interlude**

Nellie du Toit had planned to study singing privately with Maria Hittorff. She had mentioned to the press that she planned to return to South Africa after two years, on completion of her studies (Allegro 1955). However, she returned to South Africa after a sojourn in Vienna of about two months only.

It was certainly not easy for a newly-wed young woman to start a new phase of her life overseas without her husband. Not that Du Toit lacked the self-confidence to find her way on her own in an unknown environment. Her stay in England had proved that she could stand on her own feet. But this time life in an unknown country involved a new partnership with a new singing teacher, the success of which greatly depends on the temperament and personality of both parties being compatible. According to Dr Du Toit (2001a), this was not the case. She did not have the same rapport with Maria Hittorff as with Adelheid Armhold.

Perhaps the display of her talent might have been able to remedy the unlucky situation, but unfortunately Du Toit was not given the opportunity to sing in public (Du Toit 1998). The fact that she married Philip Crouse before she left for overseas studies already gives an indication of where her heart lay. She was a young married woman and felt her commitments lay at home. Since Philip Crouse could not join his wife in Vienna, as planned, Du Toit returned to South Africa. She and her husband set up their home in Pietermaritzburg and she paid back her bursary to UNISA.

### **3.4 PIETERMARITZBURG: 1956**

In 1956 Nellie du Toit was heard mainly in concerts in Pietermaritzburg and in some broadcasts. On 2 February 1956 she appeared at a benevolence concert in Pietermaritzburg (Unidentified author 1956a). On 6 February 1956 Du Toit, accompanied by Philip Briton, was heard in a joint recital with pianist Manuel Villet at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall. She performed lieder by Strauss and Schumann, art songs by Quilter and arias by Mozart. The critic “Vivace” in the *Natal Witness* of 7 February 1956 described Du Toit as “a dramatic soprano of outstanding quality” and of great “musical versatility”, judging by her interpretation of the songs that were so varied in style. He thought her best in the Mozart arias, describing her approach as “lively, direct and full of strength”. He also found that “her dramatic talent found its full scope” in the Richard Strauss lieder, whereas her Schumann interpretation displayed “delicate charm and showed [...] the subtleties of which her voice is capable”. The Quilter songs were “overcharged with dramatic interpretation” and lacking in delicacy and lyrical quality.

In the meantime Du Toit had carried on with SABC radio recordings and broadcasts. In April 1956 she broadcast Bach’s *Schemelli* lieder, the Bach “Pentecost Cantata” and Brahms lieder.

Du Toit (1998) recalls singing many art songs in 1956: lieder by Schubert, Brahms and Mahler as well as art songs by English composers. She also sang “FAK Liedjies” (Afrikaans Songs compiled by the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies).

In April 1956 Du Toit’s husband, Philip Crouse, was the soloist at a concert at the Collegiate School Hall commemorating the centenary of Schumann’s death (Unidentified author 1956b). Philip Crouse and Nellie du Toit, accompanied by Verity Griesel at the piano, also performed two groups of lieder on this occasion. In November 1956 Du Toit appeared in a new role, that of accompanist for her husband, at a Chamber Music Concert in Pietermaritzburg. The year ended with a “Grand Charity Concert” on 22 November 1956 in the Durban City Hall, in aid of the National “Our Children’s Day” appeal. The critic F.F. (1956) praised her fine singing, “characterized by wonderful serenity and musicality”. However, the critic mentioned that she was not yet a finished performer, but would reach international standards with further overseas training. The article did not mention the items that Du Toit sang.

On 18 August 1956, Christine, the Crouse’s first child, was born. That year the baby played a major role in Nellie du Toit’s life, and lullabies probably featured in her daily repertoire. Because there was not much stimulating work for Du Toit in the Pietermaritzburg area, the Crouses decided to move to Pretoria early in 1957.

## CHAPTER 4

### SINGING ACTIVITIES, TEACHING AND DOMESTIC LIFE: 1957–1962

Nellie du Toit's "real" opera career in South Africa commenced in the late 1950's. In order to obtain a clearer historical perspective of her entrance into South African opera life, a brief description of opera in the Transvaal around that time is deemed necessary.

#### 4.1 OPERA IN THE TRANSVAAL IN THE FIFTIES

When the Johannesburg City Orchestra was disbanded late in 1950, the opera endeavours by John Connell threatened to come to an abrupt end. "African Theatres" were to fill the gap with opera companies from overseas. Stead (1963: 23) quotes *The Star* of October 1950 saying that such a move would put a full-stop to a thirty-year struggle to build a South African opera tradition, would kill local endeavour and would deny South African singers the opportunity of participating in opera. Indeed, from 1951 until 1955 big Italian companies and world-renowned singers were imported: "stars" such as Benjamino Gigli and Tito Gobbi. Stead (1963: 23) furthermore quotes *The Star* reporting that Johannesburg never before had been able to listen to so many imported and important voices. The imported opera companies, and the fact that opera life took some years to get re-organised in the fifties, was the main reason why South African singers did not have the opportunity of performing professionally in opera in South Africa in the early and mid-fifties. South African singers, such as Emma Renzi, were therefore forced to seek employment in Europe.

These visiting overseas companies sometimes came to Pretoria and in the early days of John Connell, operas were regularly presented in the administrative capital of the Republic. Before 1955 the Pretoria Operatic and Dramatic Society and Volksteater presented amateur operas and operettas in their home town. Consequently, singers from Pretoria also performed in opera presentations in Johannesburg. The increasing interest in opera and the subsequent emergence of competent singers, resulted in the formation of the Pretoria Opera Group in 1956 (Stead 1963: 24). The late fifties can therefore be viewed as a period of reconstruction of opera life in the Transvaal. Different bodies struggled to streamline opera presentations meaningfully. Even before the inception of the Provincial Arts Councils, four different societies came to the fore in the Transvaal.

### **The National Opera Association of South Africa**

This association was formed on 23 August 1955 to promote Grand Opera and to encourage South African singers to remain in the country. In 1956 excerpts from Italian operas were presented. Plans for the 1956 season were unsuccessful. The first real season commenced only in June 1957 with a presentation of *Madama Butterfly* (Emdon 1984: 351).

### **The Opera Society of South Africa, OPSA**

This society was founded on 29 October 1956 in Johannesburg. The first board of directors consisted among others of Dr S H Pelissier (chairman) and Anton Hartman (musical advisor). Patrons as well as the Ministry of Education, Arts and Sciences gave financial support. The aim was to promote opera, especially through the medium of the Afrikaans language, so that the audience would be able to follow the libretto. From 1957-1963, the society presented annual concert tours to rural areas with opera excerpts presented in costumes. From 1958 the society also presented full-length operas in several towns and cities on the Witwatersrand and in the rest of the Transvaal after collaboration with the National Opera Society in the formation of a South African Opera Federation (Botha 1984: 352).

### **The South African Opera Federation<sup>1</sup>**

This federation was founded on 12 September 1957 in Johannesburg when OPSA and the National Opera Association of South Africa decided to amalgamate. For the next five years important opera performances were controlled by the Federation which received subsidies from the State, Provincial Administration and City Councils. They also imported South African singers who had made a career abroad such as Mimi Coertse, Emma Renzi and George Fourie. The Federation also regularly presented excerpts from operas in rural areas.

The following operas were presented:

1958: *La traviata* (Verdi) - in English; *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss) - in Afrikaans; *In the drought* (Joubert) - in Afrikaans<sup>2</sup> and *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini) - in English (Stead 1963: 23);

1959: *La bohème* (Puccini) - in Afrikaans; *The Telephone* and *Amelia goes to the Ball* (Menotti);

1960: (as part of the Union festival): *Die Zauberflöte* (Mozart) - in Afrikaans; and *Rigoletto* (Verdi) - in English;

1961: *La traviata* (Verdi) and *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti);

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as "The South African Opera Federation" in the English edition of SAME, "The South African Federation for Opera" in opera programmes.

<sup>2</sup> *In die droogte*

1962: (with the inauguration of the Johannesburg Civic Centre): *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Offenbach) - in Afrikaans<sup>3</sup>; *Un ballo in maschera* (Verdi) and *Hänsel und Gretel* (Humperdinck) - in English (Botha 1984: 352-353).

### **The Pretoria Opera Group**

This opera group was founded in 1956 in order to give singers from Pretoria an opportunity to participate in opera. It was meant to fill a gap in the cultural activities of that city. The baritone Louis Knobel, conductor Peter Rorke and tenor Albrecht Lewald were the founder members. The decision was to perform operas alternatively in English and in Afrikaans and not to limit performances to Pretoria only. The following operas were presented:

1956: *Carmen* (Bizet) - in concert version;

1957: *I pagliacci* (Leoncavallo);

1958: *Die nuwe Dominee*<sup>4</sup> (Rorke);

1960: *Madama Butterfly* (Puccini), *Lilac Time* (based on music by Schubert);

1961: *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Donizetti);

1962: *Carmen* (Bizet);

1963: *Der Wildschütz* (Lorzing) - in Afrikaans<sup>5</sup> (Taylor 1984: 353).

## **4.2 OPERAS SUNG BY NELLIE DU TOIT**

As mentioned above, the Crouses moved to Pretoria early in 1957 because there were not many performing opportunities in the Pietermaritzburg area for Nellie du Toit. As can be seen under 4.1, the Transvaal had potentially more to offer to young singers. Du Toit soon received her first leading role opportunity.

### **1957 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San)**

In June 1957, the newly-founded National Opera Association presented as its first production Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in English with Du Toit in the title role. This marked her first professional endeavour in pioneering opera in South Africa. She learnt the role in only three weeks, earned ten pounds per evening and waited six months for her pay (Du Toit 1998).

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<sup>3</sup> *Die Verhale van Hoffmann*

<sup>4</sup> *The new Minister*

<sup>5</sup> *Die Wilddief*



This opera was produced by Alessandro Rota<sup>6</sup>. Jeremy Schulman conducted the SABC Studio Orchestra in the Repts Theatre in Johannesburg (Programme 1957a). There were eleven performances. Du Toit, who sang the Gala opening night on 19 June 1957, shared the role of Cio-Cio-San with Rita Roberts<sup>7</sup> and Sylvia Factor<sup>8</sup>. The Italian tenor Sergio Galli<sup>9</sup> sang the role of Pinkerton.

The fact that the audience gave Du Toit an ovation for the aria “One fine day”, didn’t deter the critic L.S. (1957) of the *Daily Mail* from finding it “lacking only some extra reach to give it full excitement”. Nevertheless, he found her voice warm and capable of power. According to J.E.B. (1957) in *Die Vaderland*, the opening night was D-day for homegrown opera in South Africa. He praised the new company’s victory after many months of complications to get their first opera launched. The laurels however went to Du Toit whom he described as a tragic and moving Butterfly who delivered a performance such as no other South African singer had given before. He didn’t find her personality quite suited to the conventional view of “Butterfly” but found her solid voice and interpretation, which gained intensity until the end, very moving.

Three months after her debut as Cio-Cio-San, Du Toit sang the same role in the Alhambra Theatre in Durban between 1 and 9 October 1957 – again for the National Opera Association. Frits Schuurman conducted the Durban Civic Orchestra, Galli again was Pinkerton and Fiasconaro sang the role of Sharpless (Programme 1957b).

### **1958 – *Asterion* (Die Prinses)**

Radio history was made on 11 April 1958 when the first radiophonic opera ever to be heard in South Africa was broadcast by the SABC: *Asterion* by the Dutch composer Henk Badings<sup>10</sup>. Nellie du Toit was part of this historical event. She sang the role of the Princess. Anton Hartman conducted the SABC Symphony Orchestra.

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<sup>6</sup> The Italian tenor and producer Alessandro Rota (1900-1984) came to South Africa with the Gonzales Company in 1930 and started a singing school with his wife, Rosita Silvestri in 1932. They produced operas until the outbreak of World War II. After the war he founded the Cape Town Opera Company later known as the Labia Opera Company. When John Connell’s national opera ended in 1950, Rota worked towards founding the National Opera Association of South Africa. This kept opera in Johannesburg on the map until 1962 when the Provincial Arts Councils were founded and all private opera societies were abolished. From 1969 to 1975 he intensified his collaboration with the EOAN group (Malan 1986a: 163-164).

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix X.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix X.

<sup>9</sup> He came to South Africa in 1950. As Sergio Franchi he later made a name for himself in the lighter music repertoire in the USA (Du Toit 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Henk Badings (1907-1987). The *SABC Radio Bulletin* of 7 April 1958 mentions that this opera makes use of resources of radio to clarify and enhance the meaning of text and music. It was commissioned by the SABC because his radiophonic opera *Orestes* had won the Italia Prize in 1954. The libretto is by the foremost South African poet N.P. van Wyk Louw: the wonderful tale about bored and conceited mankind that becomes addicted to a supernatural being who creates miracles, and with every miracle spurs on the destruction of man (Unidentified author 1958).

The cast included the tenor Gert Potgieter as Asterion, mezzo-soprano Betsy de la Porte as the Old Nurse and speaker-actors such as Esmé Euvrard, Anna Neethling-Pohl, Gideon Roos and Jan Schutte, who also was the producer. The opera is described in the *SABC Bulletin* of 7 April 1958 as modern music in the idiom of Britten and Poulenc (Unidentified author 1958). The singers were commended for their fine singing although the critic D.L.S. (1958) from the *Daily Mail* found Du Toit's top notes edgy and her diction not always clear. (A tape recording is available: SABC Arcactive Database Acc. 23816. See Appendix IX.)

### **1958 – *In the drought* (Elsie)**

The performance in 1956 of the first South African opera, *In the drought* by the South African composer John Joubert<sup>11</sup>, was described as a milestone in the history of South African opera (Programme 1960a: 7). The very first production thereof in the Afrikaans translation by Anton Hartman, entitled *In die droogte*, was presented by the South African Opera Federation on 17 June 1958 at the Reps Theatre in Johannesburg (Programme 1958g: 16). Du Toit was heard in the role of Elsie, and the tenor Gert Potgieter was Mitchell. The German tenor Wolfgang Anheiser was Jakobus Rey. Erik Chisholm was the conductor and Hermien Dommissie the producer. The critic M.R. (1958) thought that this Afrikaans opera was the climax of the opera season and confessed to have been carried away by Du Toit's singing.

### **1959 – *La bohème* (Mimi)**

In June 1959 the season of the South African Opera Federation commenced with Puccini's *La bohème*, sung in Afrikaans in the translation by Bosman de Kok. This was Du Toit's first Mimi, which she alternated with Saline Koch. The tenor Gé Korsten<sup>12</sup>, as Rodolfo, sang opposite Du Toit for the first time in opera<sup>13</sup>. Bob Borowsky was Marcello and Musetta was sung by Jossie Boshoff. The opera, produced by Hermien Dommissie and conducted by Anton Hartman, was presented at the Reps Theatre, Johannesburg (Programme 1959b). (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit and Korsten as Mimi and Rodolfo.)

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<sup>11</sup> Born 1927. Malan (1980c: 446) states wrongly that Du Toit also sang in Joubert's opera *Silas Marner* in 1961. Compare Talbot (1978: 166).

<sup>12</sup> Gé Korsten (1929-1999) was born in Rotterdam and came to South Africa in 1936. In 1952 he started his vocal studies under Adelheid Armhold. He was one of the founder members of the Pretoria Opera Group, but started his career as electrician. He made a name for himself in opera, with a repertoire of more than twenty opera roles to his credit and received the Nederburg Opera Prize in 1975 for the portrayal of the title role in *Andrea Chénier*. Besides opera Korsten has sung in oratorio and numerous concerts countrywide. He reached superstar status in the light music industry, recording 57 LP albums between 1965 and 1996, more than any other South African singer, and became a popular film and TV personality. He was the director of CAPAB from 1985 to 1990 (Malan [ed.] 1984c: 143; Pretorius 1998: 135-138).

<sup>13</sup> Their first encounter on stage was in Haydn's *Die Skepping* in 1958. (See under 4.5).

The critic B.T. (1959) in *Die Transvaler* praised Du Toit for her splendid interpretation saying that she expressed the pathos of the role in the best way. Oliver Walker (1959) singled out Du Toit's singing. He thought that her Mimì saved the night from being a tragedy of a kind not intended by the composer. Walker found her voice beautifully secure; she had phrased the long melodic line of the big love themes tenderly and truly and she displayed the right kind of pathos for the deathbed finale.

### **1960 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San)**

Hermien Dommissie directed the 1960 production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in which Du Toit sang the title role, alternating with Saline Koch. The four performances on 21, 23, 25 and 26 March 1960 were presented by the Pretoria Opera Group in the Aula, Pretoria (Malherbe 2001: 38). Gé Korsten sang the role of Pinkerton, Bob Borowsky was Sharpless and Marie du Plessis sang the role of Suzuki. Hans van Heerden was Bonze and Louis Knobel was Prince Yamadori. Anton Hartman conducted the Pro-Musica Orchestra (Programme 1960f).

### **1960 – *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina)**

The year 1960 was dedicated countrywide to Jubilee Celebrations of the fifty-year-old Union of South Africa. The South African Federation for Opera had invited the South African sopranos Mimi Coertse and Hanlie van Niekerk, who were making their careers in Europe, to perform in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*<sup>14</sup> (Programme 1960c) during the festival celebrations in Bloemfontein. Nellie du Toit took over the role of Pamina from Hanlie van Niekerk in performances of the Hermien Dommissie production of *Die Towerfluit* in Pretoria (Programme 1960e: 53<sup>15</sup>; Du Toit 2002b). The tenor Lloyd Strauss-Smith was Tamino, the Queen of the Night was sung by Jossie Boshoff and Gé Korsten was the First Man in Armour. Leo Quayle conducted the SABC Orchestra. Programme 1960c erroneously states that the performances on 2, 4, and 7 of June were sung by Hanlie van Niekerk.

### **1961 – *Der Freischütz* (Agathe)**

In a concert version of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Du Toit sang the role of Agathe. Anton Hartman conducted the SABC Symphony Orchestra in the Johannesburg City Hall as the finale of the SABC symphony season, presumably in 1961. Gé Korsten was Max, Doris Brasch<sup>16</sup> sang the role of Ännchen and Graham Burns the Hermit.

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<sup>14</sup> Sung in the Afrikaans translation by Gideon Roos and Esther Mentz, entitled *Die Towerfluit*.

<sup>15</sup> The programme does not state specific dates of performances or the venue.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix X.

The assumption that this concert took place in 1961 is substantiated by the following findings: The new SABC Choir, formed in 1961, was trained by Johan van der Merwe who made his debut as choir master on this occasion (Van den Berg 1976: 80).

The critic Dora Sowden (1961) judged Du Toit's voice not heavy enough for the part of Agathe [a "jugendlich dramatisch" soprano role according to Kloiber and Konold (1985: 975)]. However, Sowden admitted that Du Toit sang with ringing purity and expressed Agathe's emotions feelingly and with outstanding brilliance. She also mentioned that there was almost no sign of the scoop that had previously often marred the beauty of Du Toit's voice. It can thus be assumed that Du Toit's voice had attained a pure lyrical quality at that stage.

### **1963 – *Der Wildschütz* (Baronin Freimann)**

Although chronologically out of place in this chapter, *Der Wildschütz* is mentioned here in order to complete the picture of operas in which Du Toit sang before the four Provincial Arts Councils took up their full-fledged activities. Albert Lortzing's opera *Der Wildschütz*, with the Afrikaans title *Die Wilddief*, was the swan song of the Pretoria Opera Group (Malherbe 2001: 44). Jan Esterhuizen translated it into Afrikaans. The Austrian-born conductor Georg Gruber was also the producer. Nellie du Toit portrayed the role of Baronin Freimann opposite the bass Fred Dalberg<sup>17</sup> as Baculus. Carla Pohl<sup>18</sup> portrayed the role of Gräfin Eberbach and Saline Koch sang Gretchen. There were five performances between 27 August and 3 September 1963 in the Aula, Pretoria. (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Nellie Du Toit and Xander Haagen in this opera.)

## **4.3 RECITALS**

It seems to have been the custom that song recitals in South Africa in the fifties and sixties were often shared with either a solo pianist or another solo instrumentalist: apparently for the sake of variety. Singers' repertoire encompassed art songs as well as opera arias. Sometimes the accompanist performed solo numbers between the sung items.

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<sup>17</sup> Frederik Dalberg (1908-1988) was born in England and grew up in Pretoria. He furthered his studies in singing in Dresden in 1930, joined the Leipzig opera (1931) and was later contracted to the Berlin State Opera. From 1946-1949 he was first bass at the Munich State Opera and became first bass at Covent Garden from 1951 to 1957. In 1960 he joined the Mannheim State Theatre and was simultaneously a lecturer in singing at the Music Academy in Mannheim. During his career, he sang in major European cities and at the Bayreuth Festival in 1937 and 1951. He participated in opera and concerts in South Africa in the fifties and sixties and settled in South Africa in 1970, lecturing singing part-time at the Stellenbosch Conservatoire (Malan [ed.] 1980e: 296-297).

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix X.

### **Recitals with Hennie Joubert**

In meeting the pianist Hennie Joubert in England in 1954, Nellie du Toit had found an artistic partner who was to be her excellent accompanist for many years until his untimely death in a car accident in 1986. In 1959 Du Toit undertook a country-wide recital tour with Joubert, arranged by the Music Societies of the Western Cape. Larger towns and villages in rural areas were visited (Jacobs 1994: 5-6).

In October 1959 the duo performed in Cape Town at the Michaelis Gallery for the recently formed Cape Town Musicale. Du Toit sang lieder by Mahler and Strauss and, as an encore, Flotow's "Last Rose of Summer". "The Music Critic" (1959) reflected that it had been a long time since her lovely voice had been heard in a Cape Town recital. Hennie Joubert's piano accompaniments matched her sensitivity and skill. Indeed her last performance in Cape Town had been seven years earlier, in December 1952, when she sang in *Messiah*. On 21 November 1959, Du Toit once more teamed up with Hennie Joubert in a recital, this time for the Music Society of Klerksdorp (Programme 1959c).

Hennie Joubert also accompanied Du Toit on 6 February 1961 at the opening of the new concert hall of the Pretoria Conservatoire for Music where he had just been appointed vice director (Jacobs 1994: 4-5).

### **Recitals with Anna Bender**

In 1960 Bender accompanied Du Toit in three recitals. The first was a joint recital with the pianist Alain Naudé for the Johannesburg Music Society on 3 February 1960 (Programme 1960a). Du Toit sang Mozart's aria "Zefiretti lusinghieri" from *Idomeneo*, the lied "Das Veilchen", and one of his earliest, little known arias "Sag nicht, o Du Geliebte". These were followed by three Mahler lieder "Aus der Jugendzeit" and three demanding Strauss lieder: "Schlechtes Wetter", "Nachtgang" and "Cäcilie". The Critic D.L.S. (1960) singled her out as "one of our best sopranos" who "proved herself a Strauss singer".

The concert with Bender on 4 March at the Aula in Pretoria was presented as part of the jubilee festival of the University of Pretoria (Programme 1960b). The third concert, on 12 September 1960, was shared with the pianist Adolph Hallis.

Du Toit's contribution comprised four German lieder: "Dein blaues Auge" by Brahms, "Im Abendrot" and "Lachen und Weinen" by Schubert and Schumann's "Widmung". The two Afrikaans songs by S. le Roux Marais were "Heimwee" and "Met 'n mandjie rose" (Programme 1960j).

On 9 March 1958 Du Toit, accompanied by Anna Bender, participated in a chamber music concert at the SABC. They performed Gustav Mahler's "Frühlingsmorgen", "Ich ging mit Lust", "Serenade", "Hans und Grete" and three lieder by Richard Strauss: "O schöner Mai", "Nachtgang", and "Cäcilie" (Programme 1958a).

### **Recitals with other accompanists**

On 20 November 1957 Du Toit, accompanied by Stefaans Zondagh, gave a recital under the auspices of the cultural association of Standerton. Her programme comprised four lieder by Schubert: "Lachen und Weinen", "Gretchen am Spinnrade", "Geheimnis", "Der Musensohn", and two Mozart duets, "La ci darem la mano" from *Don Giovanni* and "Bei Männern welche Liebe fühlen" from *Die Zauberflöte*, with the baritone Noel Cilliers. Du Toit also sang Cherubino's aria "Non so più" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, "Sì, mi chiamano Mimi" from Puccini's *La bohème* and the ever popular "O mio babbino caro" from his opera *Gianni Schicchi* (Programme 1957c). The violinist Jack de Wet was the other soloist.

Sini van den Brom was Du Toit's accompanist in a concert for the Free State Music Society on 18 April 1958 in Bloemfontein. The programme contained two lieder by Schubert, "Auf dem Wasser zu singen" and "Lachen und weinen", as well as Brahms' "Dein blaues Auge" and "Vergebliches Ständchen". Four lieder by Mahler were included namely "Frühlingsmorgen", "Ich ging mit Lust", "Serenade" and "Hans und Grete". Du Toit also sang a group of three opera arias: Pamina's aria "Ach ich fühls" from *Die Zauberflöte* and two Puccini arias. These were Mimi's "Donde lieta uscì" from *La bohème* and Lauretta's aria "O mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi*. She shared the recital with the violinist Walter Mony (Programme 1958b).

On 9 May 1960 Nellie du Toit, accompanied by José Rodriguez-Lopez, gave a song recital at the Union Festival Celebrations in Bloemfontein (Programme 1960c: 57)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The programme for the entire duration of the Festival mentions only dates and venues of concerts, and not the contents of individual performances.

#### 4.4 SOLOIST WITH ORCHESTRA

##### **Arias and duets with Gé Korsten**

According to the subtitle of a stage photo depicting Du Toit and Korsten in *La bohème*, the two artists appeared in a joint concert in the Aula of the University of Pretoria on Friday 13 November 1959. The programme featured Du Toit singing arias from *La bohème*, *Aida* and *Madama Butterfly*, and duets with Gé Korsten. They were accompanied by the SA Airforce Orchestra directed by Captain J.E. Koops van 't Jagt (Unidentified author 1959).

This was possibly one of the first recitals which initiated the partnership of Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten on the concert platform. (Their first encounter on the opera stage was during the season of *La bohème* in June 1959 when Korsten sang Rodolfo opposite Du Toit's Mimì.) This stage partnership was to last for two decades. Together they would tour the length and breadth of Southern Africa, from South West Africa (now Namibia) to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in programmes encompassing classical, light classical and popular music. Oliver Walker's opinion of Mr Korsten in *La bohème* was in no way favourable (Walker 1959). Korsten's vocal shortcomings at that stage, however, indirectly paved the way for a second career opportunity for Nellie du Toit: that of voice teacher. In fact, he was one of the first professional singers with whom she worked on vocal technique.

On 3 April 1960 Du Toit and Korsten were the soloists in a concert under the baton of Solly Aronowsky. Du Toit's contribution to the programme was "Addio del passato" from Verdi's *La traviata* and the "Waltz Song" from Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*. She partnered Korsten in numbers in a lighter vein, amongst others Lehár's duet "Niemand liebt dich so wie ich" from *Paganini* (Programme 1960g).

Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten were the soloists in a programme entitled "Operatic Highlights" presented in the Durban City Hall on 22 September 1960 by the Durban Civic Orchestra under Frits Schuurman (Programme 1960k). Du Toit's aria repertoire comprised "Ecco respiro appena" from Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur*, "Letzte Rose" from Flotow's *Martha* as well as the two Puccini arias, "In quelle trine morbide" from *Manon Lescaut* and "Vissi d'arte" from *Tosca*. The two Puccini arias as well as the two Puccini love duets from *Madama Butterfly* and *La bohème*, sung with Gé Korsten, indicate that Du Toit, at twenty-nine, was developing vocally in the direction of *lirico spinto* soprano.

Gé Korsten was also Du Toit's singing partner in a concert with the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra under the baton of David Tidboald on 5 November 1961. They sang two love duets from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (Programme 1961).

### **Arias and duets with Gert Potgieter and George Fourie**

Nellie du Toit and Gert Potgieter were the soloists with the Pro-Musica Orchestra under Anton Hartman in a concert in Germiston on 23 April 1960. Du Toit sang two Puccini arias, from *Madama Butterfly* and *La bohème*, and the love duet from Puccini's *La bohème* with Potgieter (Programme 1960h).

In 1960 Du Toit teamed up with the baritone George Fourie in a symphony concert presented at the Aula, Pretoria. They sang the duet "Silvio a quest'ora" from Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* and "Ah, dite alla giovine" from Verdi's *La traviata*. The SABC Symphony Orchestra under Edgar Cree accompanied them. Du Toit also sang three opera arias: the "Willow song" from Verdi's *Otello*, "Ecco respiro appena" from Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* and the "Arioso di Jaroslavna" from Borodin's *Knyaz Igor (Prince Igor)* (Programme 1960i).

### **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony**

On two occasions Du Toit was the soprano soloist in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in d minor opus 125, the "Choral" Symphony. On both occasions she sang it with the SABC Symphony Orchestra under Anton Hartman, the first time being on 25 November 1958 in the Johannesburg City Hall with Betsy de la Porte (mezzo-soprano), Gert Potgieter (tenor), and Wolfgang Anheiser (baritone) (Programme 1958f). On 27 May 1960 she sang this exacting part a second time, during the Union Festival Celebrations in the City Hall of Bloemfontein. The other soloists were Maud Weyhausen (alto), Gé Korsten (tenor), and Dawie Couzyn (bass). The Stellenbosch University Choir, trained by Philip McLachlan, sang the choral part<sup>20</sup>.

## **4.5 SOLOIST IN ORATORIO AND RELATED GENRES**

In the late fifties and early sixties Du Toit often appeared in oratorio and related musical work types, singing works by Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Verdi.

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<sup>20</sup> On that occasion the Choir of the University of Stellenbosch also gave the first performance of *Die dans van die reën* by Hubert du Plessis (Programme 1960d). In his *Beknopte Biografie* (s.a.) Du Plessis recalls that it was broadcast directly by the SABC (see chapter "Aktiwiteite en Betrokkenhede 1941-1960", p.6). This implies that the whole symphony concert was broadcast.



### **Handel – *Messiah; Ode for St Cecilia's Day***

Excerpts from Handel's *Messiah* sung in Afrikaans were given in the Heidelberg Dutch Reformed Church on 25 May 1958 with Du Toit as the soprano soloist, Sarie Lamprecht, alto, and the tenor Lionel Ryder. Hennie Joubert, the official conductor of the Heidelberg Dutch Reformed Church Choir, accompanied at the organ (Jacobs 1994: 6-5,6-6).

In a Handel Commemoration Concert on 18 May 1959, Du Toit was the soloist in the *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, performed with the SABC Concert Orchestra under direction of Anton Hartman in the Johannesburg City Hall (Programme 1959a).

### **Haydn – *Die Schöpfung***

On 25 June 1958, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung*, sung in Afrikaans (*Die Skepping*), was performed at the Pretoria City Hall. Professor David J. Roode conducted the Sanglus Choir with Henriette Pauw at the organ. Nellie du Toit sang the roles of Gabriel and Eva. This was her first performance with singing partner Gé Korsten, who sang Uriel (Programme 1958c). On 31 October 1958 excerpts from the same oratorio were performed at the inauguration of the Aula of the University of Pretoria, again with Du Toit as soloist (Programme 1958d). The Afrikaans Music Club of Pretoria presented *Die Schöpfung* in Afrikaans on 21 November 1962. Nellie Du Toit (soprano), Gé Korsten (tenor) and Rudi Neitz (bass) were the soloists with the Sangluskoor and Susan Steenkamp at the organ. André Ras was the conductor (Programme 1962d).

### **Mozart – *Exsultate jubilate***

In April 1959 Du Toit performed Mozart's motet *Exsultate jubilate* KV 165 with the SABC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Edgar Cree. The critic U.G.S. (1959) praised her first-class singing and asked why she did not perform more often for the local public.

### **Verdi – *Messa da Requiem***

The Afrikaans Music Club presented Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* in the Pretoria City Hall in 1960. Nellie du Toit, (soprano), Fannie Papageorge (mezzo-soprano), Gé Korsten (tenor), Rudi Neitz (bass) and the Sanglus Choir were conducted by Prof. Dawid J. Roode. Helene Erasmus played the orchestral reduction on the organ. Alexina (1960) thought that Du Toit's voice had an impressive range which lent itself excellently to a work of this type.

Her voice showed “beautiful fullness” in the lower register and “a lovely lightness” in the higher register<sup>21</sup>. Another critic, B.O. (1960), singled out Du Toit’s pure, ethereal and sympathetic voice in “Libera me domine”. This very taxing music definitely requires fullness in the lower register as described by Alexina (1960) but also ethereal pianissimos on the highest notes. Du Toit’s vocal abilities certainly encompassed these requirements, an early hint that her voice was growing into a heavier *Fach*. Only four years later, in 1964, would she sing her first Verdi opera, *Il trovatore*.

### **Oratorio arias with organ accompaniment**

On 9 November 1958 Du Toit sang oratorio arias by Bach, Handel, Haydn and Mozart to the organ accompaniment of Hennie Joubert in the Dutch Reformed Church in Kroonheuwel, Kroonstad (Programme 1958e).

In a Sunday evening concert on 29 April 1962 at the Pretoria Conservatoire of Music, Nellie du Toit sang a selection of Bach arias. Willem Mathlener accompanied her on the organ. Erwin Broedrich (violin) and Tony White (oboe) played the obbligato instruments. The concert was shared with an instrumental trio (Programme 1962a).

## **4.6 SABC RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS**

Until the formation of the Provincial Arts Councils in the early Sixties, the SABC was the pivot around which the musical activities in South Africa rotated (cf Chapter 1, page 4). Thus the SABC also became an important work provider for Nellie du Toit in 1958, 1959, 1963 and 1965 (Van den Berg 1976: 107). Within this framework she found meaningful singing opportunities.

According to the SABC Arcaactive database (Acc. No. 107518) there was a live broadcast from Studio 1A in Commissioner Street in 1958 with Nellie du Toit and the baritone Wolfgang Anheiser in a pot-pourri of American musicals and operettas. The programme included music by Friml and Rogers such as “Only a rose” and “Why do I love you”. The SABC Concert Orchestra was under the baton of Jeremy Schulman (See Appendix IX).

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<sup>21</sup> The soprano part stretches over two octaves, from a-flat below middle-c to c<sup>3</sup>.

On listening to these recordings at the SABC sound archives, this author found Du Toit's voice solid in its middle register, with a good legato line, floating pianissimos, *messa di voce* and clear enunciation of consonants. Only the lower notes sounded somewhat pressed.

Sapa (1959) reported the broadcast on 13 and 15 October of a programme entitled "Commonwealth Concert Hall" by the General Overseas Service of the BBC. It featured, amongst others, Du Toit singing arias by Puccini. Jeremy Schulman conducted the SABC Symphony Orchestra. This possibly took place in 1959, since the newspaper clipping was found with other clippings of that year in Du Toit's journal of press clippings.

#### **4.7 TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

##### **Afrikaans Girls' High School, Pretoria**

When the Crouses moved to Pretoria in 1957, Philip Crouse taught English at the Pretoria Afrikaans Boys' High School (Afrikaanse Hoër Seunskool), where he also played the piano for Assembly, according to Edward Aitchison (2001) who was one of his pupils. Just across the street from the Boys' School, Nellie du Toit took up a teaching post at her alma mater, the Pretoria Afrikaans Girls' High School (Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria) where ten years earlier she had made her solo debut in a school operetta. For the next two years she was going to teach the subject then known as "class singing" ("klassang"), three times a week, according to Acáma Fick, one of her ex-pupils at the school.

The well-known Afrikaans Girls' High School ("Affies") had far over a thousand pupils at that stage. Dr Du Toit remembers that there were up to ninety girls per singing class. Acáma Fick remembers clearly that "Miss Du Toit" was well prepared for every class and had no problems with class discipline. The girls sang not only unison songs but also two- and three-part songs in different languages. Most girls loved these classes but some of the musically educated pupils could not really understand "why such a glorious voice was to be found teaching teenagers in a school singing class" (Fick 2000). Du Toit also let her school pupils participate in eisteddfodau. Her excellent school choir was asked to sing at the funeral of Prime Minister J.G. Strydom in 1958 (Fick 2000). (See Appendix XII for photo depicting Du Toit with her choir.) Du Toit gave up her teaching post at Afrikaans Girls' High School after the first term of 1959 in order to be able to devote more time to her singing career.

### **Lecturer in Singing – Pretoria Conservatoire**

When the Conservatoire of Music in Pretoria was founded in 1960 (Mathlener 1982: 231-232), Nellie du Toit was appointed principal lecturer in singing, teaching forty-two full-time and part-time students weekly (Du Toit 1998). She held this post for two years<sup>22</sup>. An information pamphlet about the staff of the Conservatoire mentions Du Toit as senior lecturer in singing, and Johanna van Vuuren as lecturer (Jacobs 1994: 4-6, 4-7).

The pamphlet also stipulates that students must be at least sixteen years old in order to qualify for tuition. Exams / assessments of progress were held four times a year, reports were given twice a year and all students had to perform in public once a year. This indicates that Du Toit's responsibilities towards her pupils were considerable. The Pretoria Conservatoire, with Willem Mathlener as inspired director, demanded much time and total dedication from their lecturers (Fick 2000).

As all students of the Conservatoire were required to give at least one public performance per year, Nellie du Toit opted to stage Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* of which she was the producer. At that stage she was not involved in opera singing herself, due to her third pregnancy. There were four performances, namely on 5, 6, 8 and 9 May 1962. One of her students, Trudi Koeleman, who would later make a singing career in the Netherlands, was cast as second woman (Programme 1962b).

### **4.8 DOMESTIC LIFE**

Decisive events which took place in the early 1960's would influence Du Toit's career as opera singer and (indirectly) her career as a voice teacher: the birth of three more daughters to the Crouses and the inception of the Provincial Arts Councils in 1963. Du Toit devoted the first four years of the sixties to establishing her family simultaneously to her activities as singing teacher. In the meantime, the plans and activities of the Arts Councils had come off the ground and, from 1965, Nellie du Toit was involved with the Arts Councils' opera productions on a regular basis.

In the years 1961 and 1962, two more daughters were born to the Crouses: Florence on 25 June 1961 and Nelmarie on 16 August 1962. Phyllis was born on 14 May 1964. This inevitably slowed down Du Toit's involvement in operatic activities.

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<sup>22</sup> Malan (1980c: 446) wrongly states that Du Toit was a lecturer in singing at the Pretoria Conservatoire from 1959 to 1961.

Teaching, concert activities and recording for the SABC were her main singing activities when her pregnancies prevented her from opera performances. However, Dr Du Toit (2002b) mentioned that she sang in operas up to her seventh month of pregnancy. Apart from her career demands, she had to fulfil the demanding role of young mother of four. After quitting her post at the Pretoria Conservatoire for Music at the end of 1962, she continued giving private singing lessons in her home, which was more compatible with raising a family (Du Toit 1998).

Throughout this entire study it should be borne in mind that besides her numerous singing activities throughout South Africa, Du Toit was primarily the mother of four children. It is quite remarkable how she coped with her singing and teaching career as well as the raising and educating of her four daughters. In the course of her career she proved to have an incredible talent for organising herself, her work and her family – a prerequisite for a successful career. Du Toit (1998) states that things were not at all easy during the period when three of her children were in diapers at the same time. But with a full-time nurse, a full-time domestic worker and an exceptionally caring and considerate husband, everything seemed to be under control. James Conrad (2001) thought that Du Toit's husband, Philip Crouse, must have been "an angel". He was much involved in the running of the household and looking after the four daughters when Du Toit was away from home, which was not longer than two to three weeks in a row. She also made a point of coming home occasionally for a weekend in between performances (Du Toit 1998).

#### **4.9 SUMMARY**

In the late fifties and early sixties Du Toit sang in **five** (six with *Wildschütz*) **opera productions**, **one radiophonic opera** and an **opera in concert version**. Since she could not yet make a living solely out of opera performances, she took up **teaching** first at the **Pretoria Afrikaans Girls' High School** and then as **lecturer** at the **Pretoria Conservatoire**. Having widespread singing interests, Du Toit considerably augmented her recital activities during this period. In most of her recitals, which were often shared with other musicians, her **accompanist** was **Hennie Joubert**. At times **Anna Bender** also accompanied her. Her art song repertoire featured mainly lieder by Mahler, Brahms and Schubert.

The year **1958** initiated her **singing activities with the tenor Gé Korsten** with whom she started singing in oratorio and duets in joint recitals and in orchestral concerts.

On several occasions she was **partnered** by the **tenor Gert Potgieter** and a few times by **baritone Wolfgang Anheiser**. She also sang duets with the **baritones Noel Cilliers** and **George Fourie**.

In the late fifties Du Toit sang in **four oratorios** (or related genres) by the composers Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Verdi respectively. She was the soprano soloist in **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony**. Du Toit frequently performed with the SABC Orchestra either in oratorio or in concerts, some of which were broadcast live.

In her late twenties and early thirties du Toit could still be regarded as a **lyric soprano**, her voice having attained **pure lyrical qualities**. Critics described it as “warm”, “capable of power”, “beautifully secure”, of an “impressive range” showing “beautiful fullness in the lower register and a lovely lightness in the higher register” with “floating pianissimos”.

The choice of Du Toit's repertoire indicated that her voice showed potential for developing into more dramatic spheres. Her **opera repertoire** at that stage already included **Puccini's *La bohème*** and ***Madama Butterfly***. Her concert work often included **Puccini arias** and, at thirty, she made an early acquaintance with **Verdi**, singing the demanding soprano solo part in his *Messa da Requiem*, an early indication that her voice would perhaps be naturally at home in the Italian repertoire

These years also established her role as **mother of four daughters**.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROFESSIONAL YEARS WITH THE ARTS COUNCILS: 1963–1969

#### 5.1 THE FORMATION OF THE PROVINCIAL ARTS COUNCILS

The Republic of South Africa (1961-1994) was divided into four provinces before the restructuring of the South African government in 1994. These provinces were the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, Natal and the Cape Province. On 12 June 1962 the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences announced in Parliament that the National Theatre Organization (NTO)<sup>1</sup> that had been created on 7 July 1947 would be disbanded<sup>2</sup>. The Government decided that henceforth the activities of the former NTO would be carried on regionally, but would be subsidised by the State.

Accordingly, autonomous regional committees were created for each province of South Africa. The goal of the regional committees was to establish the performing arts on a professional basis, which would provide artists with a reasonably secure and civilised livelihood. The four Arts Councils were the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT), the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB), the Natal Performing Arts Council (NAPAC) and the Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State (PACOFs).

The Transvaal and the Cape were in a more favourable position than Natal or the Orange Free State. The NTO had for years been active in the Transvaal, and the Cape Province possessed established organisations like the Eoan Group and the Opera and Ballet School at the University of Cape Town<sup>3</sup>. Within a year of the Arts Councils' inception, a co-ordinating council was formed. This council was seated in the Transvaal and looked into the co-operation of the four Arts Councils. One of the co-ordinating council's immense tasks was to form a register of artists and technicians available in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> The NTO was the brainchild of Dr P.P.B. Breytenbach ('Oom Breytie'), a prominent figure in South African theatre life. He became the first director of PACT in 1962 (Malan [ed.] 1980d: 233).

<sup>2</sup> According to "Bylae tot die Volksblad" of 25 March 1988, p.8. "Suksesverhaal het in Augustus '62 begin".

<sup>3</sup> Before the formation of CAPAB in 1963, virtually all opera in Cape Town was presented by the University Opera Company and the EOAN group (Mears 1980: 760).

A further aim was to bring the four art forms (ballet, theatre, music and opera) to the cities as well as to rural areas, to English- as well as Afrikaans-speaking audiences. This would furthermore provide job opportunities for South African artists (Unidentified author 1964: 62-65).

Of the four Arts Councils, PACT was not only the largest and most active from the beginning, but in 1963 also the first in this field since its control board was already constituted on 14 June 1962 (Eichbaum [ed.] 1988b: 3). PACOFS, CAPAC and NAPAC were all founded in 1963 (Eichbaum [ed.] 1988c:25; Eichbaum [ed.] 1988d: 33; Eichbaum 1988b: 14), NAPAC being the last, namely on 25 July 1963.

For a young South African singer such as Nellie du Toit – at that stage thirty-four years old – the formation of the Arts Councils must have been good news, especially in terms of career opportunities near her home and family.

## 5.2 THE YEAR 1963

In 1963 Du Toit added two additional roles to her opera repertoire. Both were sung in Afrikaans. These were the Contessa Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* for PACT (in Afrikaans *Die Huwelik van Figaro*) and Baroness Freimann in Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz*, the last opera performed by the Pretoria Opera Group<sup>4</sup> (Taylor 1984: 353). (See Chapter 4, p. 36.)

### ***Le nozze di Figaro* (Contessa Almaviva) – PACT**

Josef Witt, the famous producer from the Academy of Music in Vienna, directed *Le nozze di Figaro* in the Afrikaans translation, *Die Huwelik van Figaro*. Anton Hartman conducted all 13 performances (Peskin 1990: 90). According to Peskin (1990: 15) Nellie du Toit contributed a vulnerable and lively Countess Almaviva. She looked lovely and sang beautifully, her voice was stirring in the two arias, and she coped well with the fast section of “Dove sono”. Peskin however does not mention dates of performances.

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<sup>4</sup> The opera groups that had operated until the formation the Arts Councils were disbanded after 1963 when the Performing Arts Councils became firmly established.



### 5.3 THE YEAR 1964

In 1964 Du Toit performed one opera for PACT, namely *Il trovatore*. Surprisingly she also sang the mezzo-soprano role of Octavian in a concert version of *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss. This will be dealt with in Chapter 6.

#### ***Il trovatore (Leonora) – PACT***

Du Toit's first Verdi role was to be Leonora in *Il trovatore* which she sang alternately with Emma Renzi in August/September 1964. Redento Comacchio and Gé Korsten shared the role of Manrico and Marina de Gabarain and Carla Pohl the role of Azucena. George Fourie and Bob Borowsky were double-cast as Conte di Luna. Leo Quayle conducted the production by Peter Ebert, one of the foremost contemporary operatic directors<sup>5</sup> (Programme 1964b). Peskin (1990) comments that both singers contributed well-moulded characterisations and attractive singing. During this time Emma Renzi was based in Milan and was singing in Italian opera houses (Malan 1986: 175). The fact that Du Toit was regarded as vocally on a par with Renzi, proves the high standard of singing Nellie du Toit had achieved in South Africa.

### 5.4 THE YEAR 1965

#### ***Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride) (Mařenka) – CAPAB***

The year 1965 marked Du Toit's return to the Cape Town opera stage. Since her last opera performance there as a student in *Gianni Schicchi* in 1952 (see Chapter 2), thirteen years had passed. Her last public song recital in Cape Town had been in October 1959 for the Cape Town Musicale. She had not sung in Cape Town since then because she was too busy singing in the Transvaal (Du Toit 2002b).

February 8, 1965 was Gala opening night at Cape Town's Alhambra Theatre. The first opera to be performed by CAPAB after the inception of the Arts Councils in 1963 was Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, produced by Leonard Schach. David Tidboald conducted the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. Nellie du Toit sang the role of Mařenka. Raymond Nilsson was Jenik, Eric Shilling sang the role of Kecal and Gert Potgieter was Vasek (Pulvermacher 1965).

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<sup>5</sup> Son of the well-known producer Carl Ebert who founded the Glyndebourne Opera (Warrack and West 1994: 213).

The State President the honourable Mr C. R. Swart and his wife attended the performance. A photo documents Mrs Swart congratulating Du Toit on this memorable evening (Cloete [s.a.; s.p.]). The well-known musicologist Gunther Pulvermacher reviewed this historical event for *Die Burger* and found that Nellie du Toit was a delightful “Bride” who sang and acted charmingly. He also noted that the acoustics of the Alhambra Theatre necessitated the use of microphones, which in turn influenced the sound.

### ***Prodaná nevěsta (Mařenka) – NAPAC***

In May 1965 Du Toit repeated the role of Mařenka, this time in the Joy Shearer production of *The Bartered Bride* for NAPAC in Durban. Bradley Harris sang Jenik, Angelo Gobbato sang Kecal and Robert Pearson sang Vasek. Charles Denholm conducted the Durban Municipal Orchestra (Programme 1965).

## **5.5 THE YEAR 1966**

In 1966 Nellie du Toit sang opera exclusively in PACT productions.

### ***Die Fledermaus (Rosalinde) – PACT***

This was Du Toit’s first opportunity to take her bow in a major operetta role. She sang her first Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss between May and July 1966 in the Afrikaans translation by Bosman de Kok. There were altogether 16 performances of Peter Brenner’s production both at the Aula, Pretoria and at the Civic Theatre, Johannesburg with Leo Quayle as conductor. Gert Potgieter sang the role of Alfred. Lloyd Strauss-Smith was Eisenstein, Margaretha Deysel portrayed Adele and the mezzo-soprano Cato Brink, wife of the producer, sang the role of Prince Orlofsky (Programme 1966b).

Draudsing (1966) found Du Toit at all times vocally secure and sweet of tone, with a very “pleasing” style. He thought that her portrayal of Rosalinde was appealing, “adding just the right measure of mock dignity for the Hungarian countess”. In the main season, Du Toit was involved in a car accident. Since there was no understudy for Rosalinde, one performance had to be cancelled (Peskin 1990: 78).

### ***Il trovatore (Leonora) – PACT***

In August 1966 Du Toit had a second opportunity to sing the role of Leonora in *Il trovatore*, when she literally and figuratively “stepped in” for Joyce Barker who had fractured a leg (Peskin 1990: 40). Du Toit sang all the performances in the Aula, Pretoria. Joyce Barker was fit again for the Johannesburg performances (Du Toit 2001). The cast comprised Gé Korsten as Manrico, Bob Borowsky as Conte di Luna, Øystein Liltved as Ferrando and Carla Pohl as Azucena. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra in the production by Peter Ebert (Programme 1966c). This again demonstrated Du Toit’s professionalism and her reliability as a singer who could stand in at short notice.

### ***Prodaná nevěsta (Mařenka) – PACT***

In November/December 1966 Du Toit sang the role of Mařenka for the third time - in Victor Melleney’s production of *The Bartered Bride* for PACT. This time she shared the role with Leonore Veenemans<sup>6</sup>. Leo Quayle was the conductor (Peskin 1990: 92). Gé Korsten sang Jenik, Kecal was sung by Øystein Liltved and Vasek by Gert Potgieter. Margaretha Deysel was Esmeralda. There were ten performances (Programme 1966).

## **5.6 THE YEAR 1967**

### ***Carmen (Micaëla) – CAPAB***

In June 1967, Nellie du Toit appeared as Micaëla in Bizet’s *Carmen* for CAPAB, produced by Jan Bouws jr<sup>7</sup>. Georg Tintner conducted the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. The mezzo-soprano Nedda Casei from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York sang the principal role opposite the Don José of the British tenor Michael Trimbel. Dawie Couzyn sang the role of Escamillo and Angelo Gobbato was Moralès (Pulvermacher 1967).

In a letter to Du Toit, Louis Steyn, Music Organiser and later Director of CAPAB, rejoiced at her acceptance of the role of Micaëla<sup>8</sup>. He furthermore stipulated that the dates of the performances would be 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 23 June with a Saturday matinée which would earn her an extra R100. At that point he was not sure whether the opera would be sung in English or French, as the two overseas artists opted for the original French version.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix X.

<sup>7</sup> Son of the musicologist Dr Jan Bouws (1902-1978).

<sup>8</sup> “Ek is sommer baie in my noppies!”.

He thought that it wouldn't really matter to Du Toit since her French was excellent. Furthermore, it can be deduced from the letter that rehearsals would start eight to ten days before opening night (Steyn 1966). Steyn can be regarded as influential in the formation of Du Toit's career. He had initiated the making of Du Toit's first LP record in 1963 and also saw in her the potential of a coloratura soprano. He gave her the opportunity to sing the coloratura roles of Martha and Lucia in 1968 and 1969 (Botha 1971: 54-55). Dr Du Toit (2002c) said: "Steyn believed in me, my musicianship and vocal abilities."

Du Toit's interpretation of Micaëla was well received by the audience and the press. Pulvermacher (1967) thought that she was vocally exciting, that her voice carried excellently and that she had a big vocal range. Her pianissimos were striking and only one loud, high note sounded forced.

### ***Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) – PACT***

The only opera Nellie du Toit sang for PACT in 1967 was *Madama Butterfly* (Peskin 1990: 55). It was her third experience of a new production of this opera after the 1957 production by Alexander Rota, sung in Italian and the English production by Hermien Dommissie in 1960. This production by Victor Melleney was again sung in English. Anton Hartman conducted 11 performances altogether in the Aula, Pretoria and Johannesburg's Civic Theatre between 7 September and October 1967. Gé Korsten sang the role of Pinkerton, Evelyn Dalberg was Suzuki and Bob Borowsky portrayed Sharpless (Programme 1967f).

Both Bill Edgson (1967) and the Pretoria critic Alwyn Draudsing (1967) were dissatisfied with the production in general, which seemed to suffer from an overpowering orchestra. Edgson thought that Du Toit was particularly good in the aria "One fine day" but found the rest of her performance was not as fortunate. According to Draudsing, Du Toit had to shout to be heard. Although he had always considered her an apt Puccini singer, he this time found her voice rough and tense, and thought that it lacked her usual effortless flow of phrasing and tone. He attributed this to the unsympathetic orchestral accompaniment. Draudsing found her voice completely exhausted by the second act and concluded that it was unfair to criticise her singing or acting under these circumstances.

An unidentified author (1967b) in *The Times* praised Du Toit's soaring top notes, but found that her lower register was drowned by the orchestra.

He thought her successful in the dramatic scenes but found her performance, especially during tender moments, “as expressionless and blank as an unaddressed envelope”. However the critic F. de V. (Fleur de Villiers?) (1967) gave credit to Nellie du Toit’s portrayal for not straining the credulity of her audience.

Pieter Serfontein (1967) gave the laurels to Du Toit, who he thought brought sparkle to the demanding role, delivering singing of distinguished quality. He found her portrayal of the aria “One fine day”, as well as the last aria, to be brilliant. The critic A.J. (1967) also praised Du Toit for her excellent singing as well as the portrayal of the title role. According to him, she had placed herself with this performance in the front row of contemporary South African singers. For A.J. it was clear that with good local training and dedication, South African singers could be on a par with their overseas colleagues. Peskin (1990: 55) judged that Du Toit sang Cio-Cio-San with sensitive musicianship and understanding, but that her voice occasionally sounded hard because of the overpowering orchestra, as mentioned also by other critics.

## **5.7 THE YEAR 1968**

### ***Die Fledermaus (Rosalinde) – PACT***

In 1968 PACT again presented *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss in the Afrikaans translation by Bosman de Kok. This time Xander Haagen was the producer and Neil Chapman conducted the PACT Orchestra. Nellie du Toit sang the role of Rosalinde opposite Gert Potgieter’s Alfred. Ralie Meyer sang Adele, Jules Borowsky was Eisenstein and Louis van der Walt sang Prince Orlofsky (Programme 1968a). According to an undated PACT newsletter, *Die Fledermaus* was also taken on tour to the rural areas of the Transvaal. Between 1 and 9 March 1968, there were eight performances in the following towns: Germiston, Brakpan, Tzaneen, Louis Trichard, Pietersburg and Nylstroom.

### ***Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) – PACT***

In 1968 PACT re-staged the 1967 production of *Madama Butterfly*, in which Nellie du Toit again sang the role of Cio-Cio-San. There were altogether 11 performances between 18 April and 18 May<sup>9</sup>. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra. Gé Korsten was Pinkerton, Bob Borowsky sang Sharpless and Suzuki was portrayed by Nohline Mitchell (Programme 1968b).

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<sup>9</sup> From 18 to 27 April in Pretoria and from 2 to 18 May 1968 in Johannesburg.

Alwyn Draudsing (1968) this time regarded the performance as a triumph for Nellie du Toit. Ulmont Schneider (1968) commented on the improvement on the previous year's performance. He thought: "Nellie du Toit proved herself not only a fine singer, but an actress of skill and intelligence."

Schneider found that she admirably portrayed the growth of character and that she had ample power in her middle and upper registers although her lower range seemed a bit weak. Peskin (1990: 55) remarked that, compared to the previous year, Nellie du Toit intensified her portrayal of Cio-Cio-San. In comparison with the criticism of the 1967 production, it seemed that in the 1968 production there was no problem with an overpowering orchestra such as Du Toit had been confronted with the previous year.

### ***Martha (Lady Harriet Durham) – CAPAB***

The comic romantic opera *Martha*, by Friedrich von Flotow, was another production by Jan Bouws jr in which Derek Hudson conducted the Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. Du Toit shared the lyric-coloratura role of Lady Harriet Durham (Kloiber and Konold 1985: 221) with Antoinette Krige. The role of Lionel was shared by tenors Michael Trimbel and Bradley Harris. Evelyn Dalberg sang the role of Nancy, with Lawrence Folley as Plunkett and Angelo Gobbato in the role of Sir Tristram Mickleford (Programme 1968c). The programme does not state the exact date of performance, which took place in June 1968. According to Talbot (1978: 130) Du Toit produced "some beautiful and electrifying top F's"<sup>10</sup>.

The critic of *Die Burger*, José Rodrigues-Lopez (1968), praised Du Toit's singing and acting. He thought her rendering of "The last rose of summer" particularly moving. Du Toit's musical security impressed him and he found that her vocal quality had lost the sharpness it formerly had. Her supple appearance and movements also confirmed that she could be regarded as one of South Africa's most experienced young singers.

### ***Carmen (Micaëla) – CAPAB***

In a re-staging of the Jan Bouws jr production of Bizet's *Carmen* that opened on 13 June 1968, Du Toit once more portrayed the role of Micaëla. Nedda Casei was again heard in the title role.

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<sup>10</sup> (f<sup>3</sup>)

The cast was virtually the same as in the previous year's production, with the exception of Lawrence Folley as Escamillo and Philip de Vos in the role of Dancaïro. Derek Hudson was the conductor (Programme 1968d). The critic Pulvermacher (1968) remarked especially on Du Toit's soft, lyrical singing and her good French pronunciation.

## **5.8 THE YEAR 1969**

In 1969 Nellie du Toit had been offered the role of Ellen Orford in PACT's presentation of Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Du Toit however declined this offer, since at that time she was venturing into the realms of coloratura soprano, preparing for *Lucia di Lammermoor*, for which she needed more time (Du Toit 2001a). The only two opera roles Nellie du Toit sang in 1969 were both for CAPAB: Musetta in Puccini's *La bohème* and Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

### ***La bohème* (Musetta) – CAPAB**

In this opera season, the UCT Opera Company, in association with CAPAB, staged two productions, among which *La bohème*, at the Alhambra Theatre. Désirée Talbot, a lecturer in singing at the UCT Opera School, sang the role of Mimì in this production, which opened on 5 June 1969. Nellie du Toit sang the role of Musetta. It was the first time she sang with the UCT Opera company since 1952 (Talbot 1978: 135). Gé Korsten was Rodolfo. Gregorio Fiasconaro, who also portrayed the role of Marcello, directed the opera. David Tidboald conducted the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra (Programme 1969a).

In a telegram wishing her well with the performance, Angelo Gobbato (1969) wrote to Du Toit: "May your Musetta waltz everyone out of their seats." José Rodrigues-Lopez (1969a) thought Nellie du Toit portrayed Musetta impressively and that on her first entry she looked exactly like a character from a Toulouse-Lautrec poster for the Moulin Rouge. Her sparkling and piquant singing in the famous "Waltz" was unforgettable. Octavius Jooste (1969) of the *Cape Times* was of the opinion she played Musetta as an appropriately aggressive coquette. He also stated that the temperamental differences between her and Mimì were strongly contrasted in the quartet quarrel scene in the third act. (See Appendix XII for photograph of Du Toit as Musetta.)

### ***Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) – CAPAB**

Du Toit's biggest triumph in her operatic career thus far, however, came with her portrayal of the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

The opening night for this production by Gregorio Fiasconaro, was 12 June 1969. The conductor was Derek Hudson. Gé Korsten sang the role of Edgardo, Lawrence Folley was Enrico and Bradley Harris was Arturo (Jooste 1969).

The well-known accompanist and music journalist José Rodrigues-Lopez (1969) reviewed this sensational performance in South African opera history for *Die Burger*. He thought that up to then Du Toit had been known as a competent singer whose artistic personality was characterised by diligence and honest modesty, but that she this time delivered virtuoso singing of the very best. In addition, she showed an admirable capability to enter the innermost nature of this role, displaying all its facets ranging from profound tenderness to frenzy. He wrote that the audience had to wait long for this splendid achievement, due to the wise artistic insight of Du Toit herself, who did not want to attempt such a big and demanding role too early. (See Appendix XI for the original Afrikaans press review. (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as Lucia.)

Octavius Jooste (1969) wrote in the *Cape Times*:

*In choosing Nellie Du Toit in the name part, he [Fiasconaro] showed wisdom, for he could hardly have chosen better. A more spiritually serene singer for this character would be very difficult to find.*

*The whole opera could stand or fall by her singing especially in the famous “Mad” scene. Here Miss du Toit scored a great triumph both for herself and the opera. It demanded great technique, fluency, flexibility, impeccable intonation and deep insight, and whatever shortcomings she may have displayed from a histrionic point of view earlier in the opera, were fully made up for by her singing and acting in this scene. In this scene, it is necessary to convey many moods, and she fully caught the spirit of every mood.*

According to the critics who attended this performance, Du Toit received a near hysteric ovation for her portrayal of the role of Lucia, something up to then unheard of in South African opera history. The article by an unidentified author (1969b) entitled “Lucia receives wild ovation at opening”, stated that “the ovation for Nellie du Toit’s performance in the “Mad Scene” was among the biggest – if not the biggest – ever in Cape Town. Miss Du Toit took four curtain calls immediately after the scene”. The unidentified author also quoted the commentary of some well-known personalities in music circles. Dulcie Howes, head of the CAPAB ballet company said that for her Du Toit's singing in *Lucia di Lammermoor* was one of the greatest theatrical experiences and that she had never been as moved as during the “Mad Scene”. Howes thought that she never heard a bigger ovation from a Cape Town audience.



The Cape Town producer Mavis Taylor also found the Mad Scene “tremendously exciting and absolutely marvellous”. Pretoria based designer, Aubrey Couling, thought that in Johannesburg this “Mad Scene” would have received a standing ovation<sup>11</sup>.

“Nellie du Toit among the greatest”<sup>12</sup> is the heading in *Beeld* of 15 June 1969. The unidentified author (1969a) mentions that no other prima donna on a South African stage had probably ever received an ovation such as Du Toit had for her portrayal of the title role in Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Many described her brilliant personification of this very difficult role as a milestone in South African opera.

The article quotes the well-known British conductor David Tidboald’s comment that he had seen Callas and Sutherland in this role and rated Du Toit’s performance as world class. He had always considered Du Toit to be a real artist, but in *Lucia di Lammermoor* he realised that she was great. The article also quotes Du Toit’s own view: With Lucia, she had reached the zenith of her opera career thus far. She added that she could develop even further. According to *Beeld*, her voice had developed considerably over the previous three years; Du Toit had made a brilliant success of the role which required a coloratura soprano with a wide range and flexible voice. Nellie du Toit therewith established herself as a singer whom the world would henceforth have to take into account.

The fact that a Johannesburg newspaper was commenting on Du Toit’s success in the Cape confirms that she had truly made name for herself in the opera world and had reached star status. Her success in the Cape created a sensation in opera circles and probably also sparked a bit of envy among her Transvaal admirers. They were not able to hear her in that role until 1974 when PACT finally gave Du Toit the opportunity to sing it in the Transvaal. Unfortunately Du Toit was never heard in this role beyond the boundaries of South Africa.

Two letters from colleagues also sing praises to Nellie du Toit’s “Lucia”. The legendary South African dramatic soprano Cecilia Wessels<sup>13</sup> wrote to Nellie du Toit after the première (Wessels 1969).

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<sup>11</sup> The biographical programme notes of several subsequent programmes state that Du Toit received a standing ovation.

<sup>12</sup> “Nellie du Toit onder die grootstes”. See original review in Appendix XI.

<sup>13</sup> She also performed during the Van Riebeeek Festival in 1952, where Nellie du Toit sang the solo part in Mahler’s Fourth Symphony (see Chapter 2).

*My dear Nellie, I hasten to send you my warmest congratulations on your beautiful singing in "Lucia". As the opera proceeded the voice became more convincing and your "Mad Scene" was most intense and dramatic. Bravo! I also enjoyed your "Musetta." You were very coquettish and your voice rang out beautifully.*

The mezzo-soprano Evelyn Dalberg wrote to Du Toit on 27 June 1969:

*Your Lucia was quite fantastic, everyone who saw it was completely thrilled. You sang and acted so beautifully and on the whole it was a most exciting and moving performance.*

In the brochure *The First Ten Years CAPAB*, Cloete [ed.](s.d.) gives the following caption to a photograph featuring Du Toit and Gé Korsten in the *Lucia di Lammermoor* production:

*If an award were to be granted for the most brilliant performance given during the years that CAPAB was staging operas in the fondly remembered old Alhambra Theatre, Nellie du Toit would probably be the strongest contender. She was given a near-hysterical ovation for her performance in Lucia di Lammermoor.*

In an SABC interview with Suzanne van Wyk, recorded on 27 June 1969 shortly after the *Lucia* performance, Du Toit mentioned that she studied the role of Lucia intensely for three months. She had sung about 20 roles until then and felt she was moving into the *Fach* of dramatic coloratura soprano (Du Toit 1969).

## **5.9 SUMMARY**

Since the inception of the Arts Councils **in the sixties** Nellie du Toit sang eight opera seasons for PACT, six for CAPAB and one for NAPAC. In this **total of fifteen seasons** she sang four operas in the original Italian, two in the original French, six in English translations and two in Afrikaans translations.

On the whole, Du Toit's singing and artistry were very well received by the critics. They praised her **soaring top notes, striking pianissimos, ample power in the middle and upper register** and the **big range** and **carrying power of her voice**. They also described her as vocally exciting and her **singing** as being **brilliant** and of **distinguished quality**. The only time the press critique was less favourable, was with the English production of *Madame Butterfly* in 1967 when Du Toit had to sing against an unsympathetic orchestral accompaniment which caused her voice to sound rough. She was also considered an **actress of skill and intelligence**. It becomes clear that in the 1960's she was already **regarded as one of the foremost young South African singers**.

Up to that stage Du Toit was regarded as fine lyric soprano. In the course of maturing in her thirties, and as a natural consequence of a solid technique correctly applied, Du Toit's **voice expanded** in height and depth. It gained top notes in the coloratura range. Simultaneously her middle and lower register acquired darker qualities. This made it possible to attempt coloratura soprano roles of lyrical as well as dramatic quality, since she had not lost the lyrical aspects of her voice or her excellent legato line and beautiful pianissimo singing.

Up to that stage Du Toit had sung the **lirico spinto role** of **Cio-Cio-San** more often than any other role, an indication that her voice had good dramatic qualities. **Lyric soprano roles** which Du Toit sang in the 1960's were **Micaëla** and **Mařenka** as well as the role of the **Countess** in *Le nozze di Figaro* which is regarded as a predominantly lyric role according to the Italian classification system (Warrack and West 1994: 669)<sup>14</sup>. The **lighter roles** included **Musetta** and **Lady Harriet**, whereas the more **dramatic roles** were **Leonora** and **Rosalinde**.

In terms of vocal development Du Toit was at this stage able to approach the coloratura role of Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with a more dramatic colouring, compared to the customary lyrical approach. Her spectacular Lucia made **South African opera history** and placed her in a **class of international standard**.

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<sup>14</sup> The classification of the (soprano) voice into different *Fach* categories differ in the French, English and German systems. Roles allocated to the various categories by the different language groups may also differ or overlap. It is therefore not possible to confine a voice to one category or *Fach* only. Compare Warrack and West (1994: 669), Rosenthal, Warrack and Alberti (1986: 849-850) and Kloiber and Konold (1985:1040-1045).

## CHAPTER 6

### OTHER SINGING ACTIVITIES: 1963–1969

Already in the early stages of her career Du Toit was a busy recitalist and oratorio singer besides recording regularly for the SABC. In the sixties she expanded her vocal activities in all directions as can be gleaned from the number of programmes studied for this research project. Her concert and recital activities were numerous and countrywide, also reaching across the borders to Mozambique, Zimbabwe (then known as Southern Rhodesia) as well as Namibia (then known as South West Africa).

Du Toit (2002f) remembers that in one particular year she sang about eighty concerts apart from her normal opera activities. An unidentified newspaper cutting with the here translated heading “Husband and daughters are part of Nellie’s singing career”<sup>1</sup> mentions that Du Toit (presumably in May/June 1967) in that year already had sixty concerts to her credit. In spite of her busy schedule she still found the time to substitute Leonore Veenemans at twenty-four-hour notice in *The Bartered Bride* for PACT<sup>2</sup>. In the article Du Toit mentions that she is constantly torn between her family and her career. She added that she could definitely make a living as an artist, but only because she had such an understanding husband and four loving daughters who made this possible (Unidentified author 1967a).

Du Toit’s first commercial LP records date from this decade and are, apart from transcription recordings of the SABC, sadly enough the only ‘records’ of her voice that are preserved for future reference.

#### 6.1 RECITALS

The term “recital” was given to performances that consisted mainly of *arie antiche*, German *Kunstlieder* and art songs in other European languages, but which also contained opera arias or concert arias. The term “concerts” was often used to describe performances with either orchestral or piano accompaniment. These performances included arias from the opera, operetta and light music repertoire. Both, recitals and concerts, at times were presented in partnership with another singer, mostly a tenor.

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<sup>1</sup> “Man en vier dogters is deel van Nellie se sangloopbaan”.

<sup>2</sup> Presented in 1967 (Peskin 1990: 93).

### **Record and recitals with Hennie Joubert**

The co-operation with the accompanist Hennie Joubert in recitals since the mid-fifties was to bear fruit when Du Toit's first commercial LP record was released in 1963 with Joubert as accompanist. It was titled *Nellie du Toit sings for your pleasure/sing vir u genot*. (See Appendix VIII for contents.) According to Botha (1971: 54), Louis Steyn was responsible for this first release. This record illustrates Du Toit's artistry at the age of thirty-three in the genres of the art song and folk-songs. At that stage there were few recordings of South African artists available on the market.

In an insert on the cover, Louis Steyn gives an outline of Du Toit's abilities as an artist. He describes her unique talent as selfless and her voice as glowing and even throughout a compass of almost three octaves. He lauds her highly intelligent interpretations saying that her approach to every performance is direct, and achieved without resorting to superficial mannerisms, which would interrupt the vocal line. Her interpretations are based throughout on subtle simplicity – the hallmark of a great artist. Steyn furthermore praises her purity of tone and remarkable vocal control.

Among the activities of the Du Toit/Joubert duo, were recitals in Potchefstroom on 10 May 1963 (Programme 1963a) and at the Musaion, Pretoria on 11 June 1965 (Programme 1965d). In 1968 Nellie du Toit had made a bursary available to the University of South Africa which would enable promising young singers to further their studies overseas. Du Toit held several concerts towards establishing this bursary in July 1968 (Programme 1968e; Programme 1968f) in which Joubert accompanied her.

Du Toit's repertoire showed diversity. Seldom did she repeat the same lieder, except for particularly popular numbers. These recitals with Hennie Joubert included works by German lieder composers such as Brahms and Schumann, (specifically his song cycle *Frauenliebe und -Leben*), and lieder from Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch* (Programme 1963a). She also sang lieder by Strauss and Mahler as well as French art songs by Duparc and Poulenc (Programme 1965d).

Afrikaans songs by S. le Roux Marais and lesser-known songs by Bellini (Programme 1968f) were included. Strictly speaking, these recitals were never pure, “undiluted” lieder recitals, as they also included (i.a.) either opera arias or a Mozart concert aria such as, “Mia speranza adorata ... Ah, non sai, qual pena”, K. 416 (Programme 1963a; Programme 1965d).

Du Toit’s programming during this period clearly shows a predilection for Verdi opera arias such as the aria “Mercè, dilette amiche” from *I vespri siciliani* (*Les vèpres siciliennes*), the “Willow song and Ave Maria” from *Otello* (Programme 1965d), “O Patria mia” from *Aida* and “Ah! fors’ è lui” from *La traviata* (Programme 1968f). She also sang the “Czardas” from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss, as well as songs in a lighter vein by Novello and German. Du Toit’s programmes also included well-known items such as the Handel arias “Care selve” and “Oh had I Jubal’s lyre” (Programme 1968f). The bursary recital programmes (Programme 1968e; Programme 1968f) reflect Du Toit’s versatility. She included four taxing arias in her recital. The juxtaposition of pure coloratura soprano arias from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* and Verdi’s *La traviata* with an aria from the dramatic soprano repertoire, namely Verdi’s “O patria mia” from *Aida* as well as the “Czardas” from *Die Fledermaus* displayed her vocal versatility. According to Dr Du Toit (2002a) she coped well with such a demanding programme and did not experience any vocal problems.

On three occasions Nellie du Toit, accompanied by Hennie Joubert, shared recitals with another musician. This was the case in a recital for the George Music Club in October 1963, with tenor Gert Potgieter (Programme 1963d). Du Toit’s programme included lieder by Reger and art songs by Hageman and Frank Bridge as well as two Mozart arias and some folks songs. The Mozart arias were Contessa Almaviva’s aria “Dove sono” from *Le nozze di Figaro* and Constanze’s dramatic coloratura aria “Martern aller Arten” from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, an opera she sadly never performed on stage.

According to an undated programme (Programme 1963e), PACT presented a shared recital by Du Toit and the violinist Derek Ochse. According to Prof. Ochse this programme dates from either 1963 or 1964 when this recital was taken on tour to various towns in the Mpumalanga-area of the old Transvaal province: Ermelo, Piet Retief and Middelburg among others (Ochse 2002).

A “Concert of South African Artists” was presented for the official opening of the University of Port Elizabeth on 9 August 1965. Du Toit was accompanied by Hennie Joubert in songs by Duparc and Poulenc, Arnold van Wyk’s *Vier Weemoedige Liedjies* and two Verdi arias. The other participating musicians were Chris Swanepoel (organ), Hubert du Plessis (piano) and the tenor Gert Potgieter (Programme 1965g).

### **Recitals, recital tours and shared recitals with other accompanists**

On 1 August 1963 Du Toit, accompanied by Dr Rupert Mayr, presented a recital for the Grahamstown Music Club at the City Hall. The programme featured lieder from Schumann’s *Liederkreis* Op. 39, lieder by Schubert, Brahms and Wolf, three Swiss folk songs and a Mozart concert aria (Programme 1963b). According to the *SABC Bulletin* of 9 December 1964 (Unidentified author 1964b), Du Toit and Gert Potgieter, accompanied by Sini van den Brom, undertook a concert tour to South West Africa in the latter half of that year.

CAPAB arranged a concert tour of towns in the Eastern Cape for Nellie du Toit and the famous South African pianist Lionel Bowman in April 1967. Bowman was also to accompany Du Toit. Amongst the towns visited were Queenstown (Programme 1967c) and Fort Beaufort (*Fort Beaufort Advocate* 1967). Prof. Bowman (2002) recalls that they performed in about eight to ten concerts during this tour which lasted about two weeks and included towns such as George, Knysna, Port Elizabeth, East London and Grahamstown.

The undated tour programme (1967d) contained a choice of two recital programmes. These included a selection of three *arie antiche* by Scarlatti and Handel, followed by a choice between a group of three songs by Mendelssohn, Valverde and Massenet, or five Brahms lieder. In the second half there was a choice between the arias “O luce di quest’ anima” from Donizetti’s *Linda di Chamounix* and “Scena and Cavatina” from Bellini’s *I puritani*<sup>3</sup> or a group of four Richard Strauss lieder. These vocal works were interspersed with Lionel Bowman’s piano solos. Prof. Bowman experienced it as a sheer joy to accompany Nellie du Toit. He described her as a very professional artist with an extraordinary voice that could do almost anything. He considered her the finest singer he ever worked with, also because she was always prepared and completely reliable, possessed charm, her intentions were clear cut and unfussy, and she never showed any emotional strain or exhibited a highly-strung “diva” attitude.

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<sup>3</sup> Possibly Elvira’s aria “Qui la voce”.

He thought that she was a very modest woman, who never pushed herself to the fore. In short, a “real lady” (Bowman 2002).

Laura Searle was Du Toit’s accompanist on her second CAPAB concert tour of the Cape Province presumably in 1969 when towns like Bonnievale, Swellendam and Riversdal were visited (Kooij, unidentified newspaper clipping, presumably 1969). Their Cape Town concert included two Handel arias, two songs by Bellini and a Bellini aria “Ah, non credea mirarti” from his opera *La sonnambula*.

There were also two Afrikaans songs by S. le Roux Marais, two folk songs, a song by Bizet and two Spanish songs which represented Du Toit in a lighter vein: “Clavelitos” by Valverde and “Seguidillas” by Albeniz. She concluded the recital with Urbain’s aria: “Nobles seigneurs, salut” from Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* - an aria not heard before in any programme - and Violetta’s aria “Ah! fors’ è lui” from Verdi’s *La traviata* (Programme 1969g).

Kooij (1969) praised Du Toit’s singing as being of a high standard. He wrote that this was to be expected after her brilliant success in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. He was also struck by a new facet in her interpretation abilities, namely her roguish delivery of some folk songs. “O had I Jubal’s lyre” was less appealing to him, because of disproportionate breath control. In “Rooidag” her voice quality was marred by a strange sharp sound. However, after the aria from *La traviata*, the listener could only be under the impression of the great talent of this gifted singer.

### **Recitals with Gé Korsten**

According to several of the programmes obtained for this research, Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten, accompanied by composer Laurens Faul, gave three joint recitals between 1966 and 1967 in, among others, Vryheid and Pietersburg. They gave another recital in Alberton on 10 March 1967 (Programme 1967a). The programmes, of which some are undated, have a similar content. Songs by S. le Roux Marais and the Spanish song “Clavelitos” by Valverde seemed to be favourites and “Ouvre tes yeux bleus” by Massenet, a novelty. Arias included Mimì’s aria “Si, mi chiamano Mimì” from Puccini’s *La bohème* as well as “O luce di quest’ anima” from Donizetti’s *Linda di Chamounix*. Duets included “E il sol dell’ anima” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, the love duet from Puccini’s *La bohème* and two items in a lighter vein: “One day when we were young” by Johann Strauss, and “Only a rose” from *The Vagabond King* by Friml.



A similar programme, comprising a selection of opera arias and duets by mostly Verdi and Puccini as well as items in a light vein, was presented by Du Toit and Korsten on 1 December 1967 (Programme 1967g).

Presumably also in the sixties NAPAC presented a recital by Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten accompanied by Jacqueline Martens, as can be gleaned from an undated programme (1964e). It comprises songs in different languages as well as arias and duets from the operas by Verdi, Mascagni and Puccini.

The well-known composer and accompanist Prof. Pieter de Villiers (2002) recalls stepping in for Hennie Joubert, when he accompanied Du Toit and Korsten in the town of Hennenman in the Orange Free State. According to De Villiers, who was first and foremost the accompanist of Mimi Coertse, this was the only time that he accompanied Nellie du Toit in such a recital.

## **6.2 SOLOIST WITH ORCHESTRA**

### **Arias with orchestra**

In 1965 Du Toit was the soprano soloist with the PACT Orchestra under the baton of Eberhard Künkel in three Verdi arias: “Ah! fors’ è lui” from *La traviata*, “Ernani, Ernani, involami” from *Ernani* and “Ritorna vincitor” from *Aida* (Programme 1965b).

Neil Chapman was the conductor of the PACT Orchestra in a concert tour of the Transvaal between 13 and 22 March 1967<sup>4</sup>, in which eight towns were visited. On this occasion Du Toit sang two arias by Puccini, “Sì, mi chiamano Mimì” from *La bohème* and “Un bel dì” from *Madama Butterfly*. Her other two contributions from the Italian opera literature were “O luce di quest’ anima” from Donizetti’s *Linda di Chamounix* and “Qui la voce sua soave” from Bellini’s *I puritani* (Programme 1967b). The aria of the Queen of the Night, “Der Hölle Rache”, from *Die Zauberflöte*, the “Laudate Dominum” (K. 339) and “Agnus Dei” (K. 195) was Nellie du Toit's contribution to an all Mozart programme in Paarl on 17 August 1968. The unnamed orchestra was conducted by Herbert Menges (Programme 1968g).

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<sup>4</sup> From information inside the undated programme it can be assumed that this concert tour took place in 1967.

### **Duets and arias with orchestra**

On 19 March 1965 Nellie du Toit and Gert Potgieter performed in a programme of opera arias and duets in the Teatro Manuel Rodrigues in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) in Mozambique. The SABC Symphony Orchestra was under the baton of Edgar Cree. This was in commemoration of the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the "Rádio Clube de Moçambique". Du Toit sang the Verdi arias "Pace, pace mio dio", from *La forza del destino* and "Ritorna vincitor" from *Aida*. The duets included "Parigi, o cara" from Verdi's *La traviata*, "Tornami a dir" from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, "O soave fanciulla" from Puccini's *La bohème*, as well as the duet "Niemand liebt dich so wie ich" from the operetta *Paganini* by Lehár (Programme 1965a).

Duets with Gé Korsten included "Signore, ne principe" from Verdi's *Rigoletto* and "Un dì felice" from Verdi's *La traviata* (Programme 1968i) in a concert at the Civic Theatre, Klerksdorp on 9 November 1968. In 1969 Du Toit sang the duet "Tutte le feste al tempio" from Verdi's *Rigoletto* with the baritone Jaco van der Merwe at a concert with the Johannesburg Promenade Orchestra conducted by Dr Solly Aronowsky (Programme 1969c).

Apart from the opera duets, Du Toit also appeared as soloist at the above-mentioned concerts. Her choice of arias included Donizetti's "O luce di quest'anima" from *Linda di Chamounix*, the "Waltz Song" from Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, the aria "Mercè, dilette amiche" from Verdi's *I vespri siciliani* (Programme 1968f) and the "Czardas" from Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* (Programme 1969c).

Between 26 November and 6 December 1969 Du Toit and Korsten sang with Jos Cleber and the SABC Orchestra in a light music performance in Pretoria, Germiston, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, Roodepoort and Springs (Programme 1969e). A recording was made at the Klerksdorp performance. (See Appendix IX: Tape Recordings: Acc. No. 107422.)

### **Hubert du Plessis: *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad***

On 24 May 1966 Nellie du Toit was the soprano soloist in Hubert du Plessis' *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* (Op. 29), a work commissioned by the SABC for the fifth anniversary of the Republic of South Africa. Anton Hartman conducted the SABC Symphony Orchestra in the Musaion, Pretoria. Du Plessis' opus 29 can be described as a tone poem for solo soprano, choir and orchestra in two movements (B.D.M. 1966).

Dr Du Plessis (2002) relates that he happened to be in his garden when he first heard Nellie du Toit sing, on the radio. She sang “The Last Rose of Summer”. This was so movingly beautiful to him, that from then on he had great admiration for Du Toit as a singer. When he composed the solo soprano part in the “Winternag“-movement of *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad*, he had her voice in mind, since it is his principle to compose for a particular voice.

In the first movement, “Winternag”, the soprano sings a lamenting, melodious, slow legato line. The second movement is more dramatic, ending in a setting of an Afrikaans patriotic poem for five-part chorus with soprano. In the third stanza soprano and choir revert to the lamentation which occurred in “Winternag”. The jubilation is then resumed with, (i.a.), trumpet fanfares, and the soprano ends on the high C [c<sup>3</sup>] (Programme 1968h; Programme 2002b). (See Appendix IX for recording details of this work.)

Dr Du Plessis remembered Nellie du Toit’s wonderfully triumphant high C at the very end of the piece (Du Plessis 2002). The critic B.D.M. (1966) from the *Pretoria News* was of the opinion that Du Toit sang “Winternag” with pathos and an eloquence of tone that enhanced the dramatic beauty of the setting.

Two years later, on 19 September 1968, Du Toit again was the soloist in *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad*<sup>5</sup> by Hubert du Plessis during the inaugural concert for the General J.B.M. Hertzog monument in the City Hall, Bloemfontein. Anton Hartman conducted the SABC Symphony Orchestra. She also sang two Afrikaans songs with orchestral accompaniment: “Waar Tafelberg begin” and “Slaap rustig, dapper helde”, arranged by Hermann Herz (Programme 1968h).

### **Richard Strauss: *Der Rosenkavalier* (Octavian) (concert version)**

Phyllis, Nellie du Toit’s fourth daughter, was born on 14 May 1964. Within two weeks Du Toit was back on stage, singing the mezzo-soprano role of Octavian in a concert version of excerpts from Richard Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier*. She had learned the role in the nursing home (Du Toit 1998). Although Octavian is regarded as a role for mezzo-soprano, it can also be sung by a soprano with a darker voice quality<sup>6</sup>. It is regarded as a role from the so-called *Zwischenfach*, when two *Fach*-categories overlap. This also is an indication that Du Toit’s voice was now becoming rounder and fuller in the lower register.

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<sup>5</sup> Du Toit performed this work a third time, on 11 August 1982 in Stellenbosch. See Chapter 9.

<sup>6</sup> As for example in the case of the Bosnian soprano Sena Jurinac (Warrack and West 1994: 367).

Dr Du Toit (2002a) mentions that at that stage she was sometimes erroneously thought of as a mezzo-soprano. The performance, in a Strauss centenary celebration, took place on 9 June 1964 in the Johannesburg City Hall with Anton Hartman conducting the SABC Symphony Orchestra. The other soloists were Joyce Barker and Jossie Boshoff (Programme 1964a).

### **Benjamin Britten: *Les illuminations***

Du Toit (2002d) mentioned that she had sung Britten's *Les illuminations* Op. 18, a song cycle for soprano and strings, in the sixties but could not remember any details. The critic M.J. Feldman (1965) commented on Du Toit's "rich, vibrating timbre" and that an "intense expression and accuracy of line rendered a polished display of mezzo-soprano singing". Robert Zeller was the conductor in this SABC Symphony Concert.

## **6.3 CHAMBER MUSIC**

On Du Toit's return from her tour with Gert Potgieter of South West Africa in October 1964, she embarked on a concert tour for PACOFS in mid-November 1964. These concerts, entitled *Music for Christmas*, were held in Harrismith, Bethlehem, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad. Nellie du Toit was the guest soloist together with the Free State String Quartet comprising Jack de Wet and Noël Travers (violin), François Bouguenon (viola) and Harry Cremers (cello) (Programme 1964c). She sang among others the "Marienlieder" by Helmut Zilcher, as well as Mozart's "Laudate Dominum".

On 29 November 1964 the Society of South African Composers held a Prize Winners' Concert of the 1964 Composers' Competition at the Alexander Theatre in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Nellie du Toit, Graham Burns and the Betty Pack Chamber Orchestra performed *Four Movements for Soprano, Baritone and Eight Instruments* by Douglas Reid. In *Drie Liedere op Teks van Totius* by Arthur Wegelin, Du Toit's piano accompanist was Johan Potgieter (Programme 1964d).

## 6.4 LIGHT MUSIC WITH GÉ KORSTEN

From 1968 Nellie du Toit started venturing into the light music repertoire, displaying her versatility as an artist.

Her singing partner was Gé Korsten, who was making name for himself in the light music scene. According to Dr Du Toit, she sang light music just for fun. It did not really relax her after singing heavier opera repertoire and she “hated singing with a microphone”. She discontinued singing in the light music genre after a few years because she thought “it was not really for her” (Du Toit 2002a).

### **Tours with the Albie Louw Trio**

There were several programmes of concerts with the Albie Louw Trio in Nellie du Toit’s collection of programmes. However, all but one<sup>7</sup> are undated. One undated programme (1969h), mentions a tour of the Eastern Cape: Graaff-Reinet, Cradock, Queenstown, Grahamstown, East London and Umtata were visited between 26 April and 1 May. According to Albie Louw (2002), who had also accompanied Du Toit on her tour with tenor Marcel Wittrisch in 1954, the first tour he and his trio undertook with Gé Korsten and Nellie du Toit was arranged by Wright and Benn Promotions in Kimberley. However, he couldn’t remember the year in which they started touring together.

He remembers that they once undertook a tour of about six weeks, which took them to towns in the Transvaal, including Kimberley and De Aar in the Cape Province, from where they proceeded to Port Elizabeth and towns in the Eastern Cape<sup>8</sup>. He also recalled a tour of South West Africa, where they performed in Keetmanshoop, Windhoek, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay.

To his knowledge they performed songs like “Deep in my heart” and “Moonlight and roses”, with Du Toit often performing popular solo numbers such as the aria “O mio babbino caro” from Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* and “I can give you starlight” by Irvin Novello. Louw thought that Du Toit varied her part of the programme more than Korsten did. She also included operetta numbers such as “Liebe du Himmel auf Erden” from Lehár’s *Paganini* and the well-known “Vilja Lied”, from Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe*, to which Albie Louw wrote the Afrikaans words.

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<sup>7</sup> Dated 1 November 1971 (Programme 1971j).

<sup>8</sup> One programme with the Albie Louw trio, which however does not state the year, mentions a tour of the Eastern Cape: Graaff-Reinet, Cradock, Queenstown, Grahamstown, East London, Umtata, visited between 26 April and 1 May.

Duets with Korsten featured the ever-beloved “Brindisi” from Verdi’s *La traviata*, the “Waltz” from *Die lustige Witwe* by Lehár and “Niemand liebt dich so wie ich” from Lehár’s *Der Zarewitsch*.

Louw mentioned that the Du Toit/Korsten duo was well liked by audiences because they presented a professional programme of a high standard. Although audiences preferred the more popular tunes that were *en vogue* at that time, it was thanks to Du Toit and Korsten that the general concert public was educated by being presented with light classical numbers from the operas and operettas. The fact that these light music concerts were always sold out, gives an indication of their success.

### **Rhodesian tour with Gé Korsten**

In November 1969 Nellie du Toit partnered Gé Korsten in *The Gé Korsten Show* in Rhodesia, arranged by John Butcher Promotions. There were four performances altogether, at the Harry Margolis Hall, Salisbury (now Harare) on 8 and 9 November and at the Large City Hall Bulawayo, on 14 and 15 November (Programme 1969d). Songs and arias from the light classical repertoire were chosen: “Sweethearts”, “One day when we were young”, “Moonlight and roses”, “I could have danced all night”, “Deep in my heart”, “Mooiste Dag”, “Edelweiss”, “Love me with all your heart”. The programme does not state the accompanist.

### **Musical: *The Student Prince* (Kathie)**

In 1969 Du Toit took her first bow in a musical production when the Port Elizabeth Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Theatre Guild presented Sigmund Romberg’s *The Student Prince* directed by Helen Mann. Gé Korsten was Prince Karl Franz of Karlsberg and Du Toit sang Kathie (Programme 1969b). The performances were from September 22 to October 4. Robert Selley conducted the Port Elizabeth Orchestra in this production in the Opera House.

### **Commercial LP records and film**

It was presumably in 1968 that Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten released their first two LP records of popular songs (Programme 1968j). These were entitled *Sweethearts* (BR 192) and *Soet Herinnering* (BR 274). It is not clear when their other duet LP entitled *Night of Love* (BRS 215) was issued, since no date appears on the record cover. A record of *The Student Prince*, featuring Du Toit and Korsten, was released presumably in 1970 (Pretorius 1998: 135). (See Appendix VIII for contents.)

In 1968 Gé Korsten played the leading role in the music film *Hoor my lied*, produced by Kavalier Films. This film also placed Nellie du Toit on the silver screen. She recalls singing a duet from *La traviata* with Korsten (Du Toit 2002e). (See photograph in Appendix XII.)

According to Pretorius (1998: 136) this was one of the most popular films released in South Africa and in those times already surpassed attendance figures of any locally produced film. It was probably another reason for attracting the public to concerts featuring the duo Du Toit/Korsten.

## 6.5 ORATORIO AND RELATED GENRES

In the later sixties Du Toit sang the solo soprano parts in Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* as well as in Bach's *Johannes-Passion* and Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*.

The SABC Symphony Orchestra under Anton Hartman and the combined SABC and Sanglus Choirs performed Bach's *Johannes-Passion* on 13 April 1965. Apart from Nellie du Toit the other soloists were Gert Potgieter (tenor), Sarie Lamprecht (contralto), Graham Burns (bass-baritone) and Jan Schutte (baritone) (Programme 1965c). In that same year Du Toit also sang the soprano part in Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, and in 1967 she was a soloist in Beethoven's *Mass in C major*, both with the Pretoria Bach Choir under Bruno Peyer (Pieterse 2000).

In the second SABC Symphony Season of 1966, the SABC Orchestra under the baton of Anton Hartman performed Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* Op. 45 in the Johannesburg City Hall on 25 October 1966 (Programme 1966d). Du Toit and the renowned French baritone Gérard Souzay were the soloists.

## 6.6 SABC RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS

Du Toit's SABC recordings in the second half of the sixties were mostly broadcast on the programmes "Donderdagaandsolis" and "Sondagaandsolis". Her diary between February 1965 and December 1968 records 13 bookings for events of this kind (Du Toit 2002c). She featured in the programme "Donderdagaandsolis" on 22 April and 11 November 1965 and on 26 June 1965 and 21 August 1966 on the programme "Sondagaandsolis". On 28 February 1965 she performed in a chamber music concert.

On 3 March 1966 Du Toit gave a SABC recital, and a broadcast on 22 April 1966. 14 October 1966 is noted for the Schumann *Liederkreis*, but it is uncertain whether this was a recording or a broadcast. Special transcription recordings for the SABC were noted for November/December 1965, 9 February 1966 and 1 September 1968. Three more programmes (other than transcription recordings) were recorded in 1968, without the diary however mentioning the dates. The final diary-date with regard to the SABC is 22 December 1968.

## 6.7 TEACHING ACTIVITIES AND DOMESTIC CHORES

Despite her full life as a performer, Du Toit always gave private singing lessons. Among her twenty students from Pretoria (unidentified author 1967) in the sixties was the tenor George Kok who started his vocal training with her in 1967<sup>9</sup>. He found her very precise as pedagogue and her approach to teaching very realistic (Kok 2001). Other students in the sixties who later made singing careers were Trudi Koeleman, Rikie Venter and Bets Botha.

## 6.8 SUMMARY

In the sixties Nellie du Toit worked mainly with **Hennie Joubert as recital accompanist**. He also accompanied her on her **first solo LP record**. **Other accompanists** with whom she performed with were Rupert Mayr, Sini van den Brom, Lionel Bowman, Laura Searle, the composer Laurens Faul, Johan Potgieter and Jacqueline Martens. Du Toit performed with the PACT Orchestra under **conductors** Eberhard Künkel, Neil Chapman and Herbert Menges, the SABC Symphony Orchestra under Edgar Cree, Jos Cleber, Anton Hartman and Robert Zeller as well as the Johannesburg Promenade Orchestra under Solly Aronowsky. The Free State String Orchestra and the Betty Pack Chamber Orchestra accompanied her in ensemble work. Du Toit regularly **recorded** and **broadcast** for the **SABC**, mainly lieder.

**Light music** featured substantially in Du Toit's repertoire in the years 1968 and 1969, which mark a close **collaboration with the tenor Gé Korsten** as duet partner in this genre. She **toured** with him throughout South Africa, South West Africa and to Rhodesia, on most occasions **accompanied** by the **Albie Louw Trio**.

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<sup>9</sup> He later appeared in many productions as her co-artist and was Artistic Director of PACT from 1992-1996. He is now a freelance producer.



She also sang her first **musical**, *The Student Prince*. **Three commercial LP records** were released, with Korsten and Du Toit singing popular songs. Du Toit also appeared in a **film** with Korsten.

In the later sixties Du Toit's repertoire of **oratorio** and related sacred musical genres included the soprano solo parts of Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* and Bach's *Johannes-Passion*. In Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* she sang opposite the world-renowned **baritone Gérard Souzay**. In 1966 and 1968 Du Toit was the soloist in the large scale **choral-orchestral work** *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* by the South African composer Hubert du Plessis.

Her **recital repertoire** in the sixties contained **lieder by Brahms, Schumann, Strauss and Wolf**, and songs by **Duparc, Poulenc and Bellini**. She also performed songs by **contemporary South African composers** such as Arnold **van Wyk** (*Vier Weemoedige Liedjies*), Arthur **Wegelin** (*Liedere op Teks van Totius*) and Douglas **Reid** (*Four movements for Soprano, Baritone and Eight Instruments*). She seldom repeated the same lieder in her recitals and her repertoire expanded. Du Toit also sang **Mozart concert arias with orchestra**.

The portrayal of **Octavian** in an abridged concert version of *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss was the **only time** Du Toit sang a role usually belonging to the **mezzo-soprano repertoire**. It was also one of only **two concert version operas** in which she could sing in the **original German**.

Of the many **opera arias** featuring in her recitals were **coloratura arias** from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* as well as **bel canto arias** from Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*, Bellini's *I puritani* and *La sonnambula*. A rarity was the aria "Noble seigneurs, salut!" from Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*.

These displayed the **versatility of her voice**, which, despite a somewhat darker timbre and inclination towards dramatic interpretation, was flexible enough to deal with *fioriture* of the coloratura repertoire. Alongside these arias Du Toit also performed arias from Puccini's *La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* as well as arias from the **lirico spinto** repertoire such as "Pace, pace" from Verdi's *La forza del destino* and "Ritorna vincitor" from *Aida*. Her duet repertoire featured well-known items from Verdi's *La traviata* and *Rigoletto*, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, and Puccini's *La bohème*.

## CHAPTER 7

### OPERAS SUNG FOR THE PROVINCIAL ARTS COUNCILS: 1971–1979

#### 7.1 THE YEAR 1971

After a complete break from opera performances in 1970 due to other singing commitments<sup>1</sup>, Nellie du Toit was probably South Africa's busiest opera singer in 1971, according to the newspapers *Die Transvaler* of 17 February 1971 and *Die Vaderland* of 12 April 1971 (Unidentified authors 1971a; 1971b). Six operas, interspersed with orchestral as well as numerous other concerts, were this year in store for Du Toit. These were Verdi's *La traviata* for PACT in March/April, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* for CAPAB in May/June in Cape Town, as well as Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Puccini's *La bohème* for NAPAC in October/November in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Du Toit would return to Cape Town in December 1971 and January 1972 for the CAPAB summer season, which included the Johann Strauss operetta *Die Fledermaus*<sup>2</sup> and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Unidentified author 1971b). The various opera performances will now be discussed in more detail.

#### ***La traviata* (Violetta) – PACT**

In March 1971 Du Toit sang her first Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*, in the Aula, Pretoria, in a Republic Festival performance. Franco Ferraris conducted the PACT orchestra in the Neels Hansen production. The opera was sung in English (Peskin 1990: 95). Gé Korsten was Alfredo and Bob Borowsky sang the role of Germont. There were four Pretoria performances, namely on 20, 24, 26 and 29 March, and five in Johannesburg: on 2, 5, 7, 10 and 14 April (Programme 1971c). Nine performances within just over three weeks can be regarded as a vocal marathon for a singer in a leading role.

Violetta is a very taxing role, and demands three “voice types” from the soprano: coloratura flexibility in the first act, lyrical qualities in the second act, and dramatic qualities in the third act. Apart from that, the acting requirements include the portrayal of opposites: from a high-spirited, elated courtesan to a tuberculosis-stricken, impoverished woman – deserted by the love of her life – who meets a slow and ailing death.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 8.

<sup>2</sup> Du Toit (2002f) said that she was not scheduled to sing *Die Fledermaus*.

From this author's own experience of the role, this multi-faceted stage character is one of the richest the opera repertoire has to offer. The successful portrayal of Violetta is a *tour de force*, vocally as well as physically.

M.J. Feldman (1971) commented as follows on Du Toit's successful performance in the Civic Theatre, Johannesburg: "Nellie du Toit's deeply felt portrayal of Violetta [...] brought out all the tragic nobility of this role. Miss du Toit is an excellent actress and, better still, has the looks and bearing to convince in the part of the beautiful woman who sacrifices herself for her love." Feldman thought Du Toit's singing was best in the final act, especially her rich middle range and clear projection which came across strongly in the aria "Addio del passato". Peskin (1990: 43) found that Du Toit was immersed in the emotions of the character and sang with commendable delicacy.

### ***Die Zauberflöte (Königin der Nacht) – CAPAB***

Du Toit's first role in the newly opened Nico Malan Theatre<sup>3</sup> in Cape Town in May 1971 was the coloratura role *par excellence*: the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. This opera was part of the inaugural festival of the Nico Malan Theatre (Botha 1971: 55). Karl Fischer conducted the opera, which was sung in the Afrikaans translation of Johan Stemmet and Rita Elferink, entitled *Die Towerfluit*. The producer was the well-known South African bass Frederick Dalberg, who had just returned to South Africa after 40 years of opera singing in Europe. Gé Korsten portrayed the role of Tamino, and Virginia Oosthuizen that of Pamina. Øystein Liltved was Sarastro and Angelo Gobbato made his debut as Papageno. Felicity Mather-Pike sang the role of Papagena (Programme 1971d).

Pieter Kooij (1971) attended the opening night of this, the second, opera in the new opera house. In his review in *Die Burger* of 7 June, entitled "Gobbato shines in the 'Flute'"<sup>4</sup> the laurels certainly went to Angelo Gobbato's Papageno. Kooij thought that Du Toit achieved reasonable success in the "impossible role" of the Queen of the Night. He found that Mozart's coloratura demands did not suit her as well as the *bel canto* style of Donizetti and that her Queen of the Night was not of the same quality as her always-unforgettable Lucia.

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<sup>3</sup> The Nico Malan Theatre, (now known as "Artscape Theatre" [author]), with a capacity of 1200 seats was opened in 1971 in time for the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Republic of South Africa (Department of Information 1969: s.p.). The opening should have taken place with Emma Renzi singing the lead in Verdi's *Aida*, but it had to be cancelled at the last moment due to her indisposition. The ballet *Sylvia* was presented instead (Breytenbach 1971: 64).

<sup>4</sup> "Gobbato skitter in die 'Fluit'".

Although she had ventured into the coloratura repertoire since her spectacular Lucia, which was followed by *Martha* and *La traviata*, Nellie du Toit (1998) herself found her portrayal of the Queen of the Night less successful. She mentioned that it was a mistake to have attempted this role; she did not really feel comfortable in it.

### ***Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) – NAPAC**

James Conrad<sup>5</sup> directed *Lucia di Lammermoor* for NAPAC in October 1971. This was the second production of this opera for Nellie du Toit after her astounding CAPAB performance in 1969. It initiated her fruitful collaboration with James Conrad who produced a large percentage of operas in the seventies with Du Toit in leading roles. Du Toit's previous appearance in Durban was six years earlier, in 1965, as Mařenka in NAPAC's *The Bartered Bride*.

The opera opened in Pietermaritzburg on 3 October and in Durban on 5 October 1971. Bryan Balkwill conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra in the Alhambra Theatre. Again, Gé Korsten sang Edgardo to Du Toit's Lucia, while Hans Van Heerden was Enrico (Programme 1971h). Tim Aitchison (1971a) described Du Toit's performance of Lucia di Lammermoor in Pietermaritzburg as brilliant. He found her sound in all registers perfect and evenly produced. Aitchison (1971b) also praised Du Toit's "splendid Lucia" after the Durban performance, as follows

*A magnificent performance by Nellie du Toit as Lucia, including one of the most artistically executed Mad Scene arias I have ever experienced, was the highlight of a most successful opening last night [...] Miss du Toit sang throughout with tremendous feeling, with great dramatic power, with vocal beauty, and acted the melodramatic extravaganza that is Lucia, splendidly. This was a performance of high artistic quality and a model of grand operatic singing and acting.*

### ***La bohème* (Mimi) – NAPAC**

According to the tradition of presenting two operas in one season, another NAPAC production by James Conrad, Puccini's *La bohème*, opened on 21 October 1971, only two weeks after *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Edgar Cree conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. Gé Korsten sang the role of Rodolfo opposite Nellie du Toit's Mimi, Hans van Heerden was Marcello and Leonore Veenemans was Musetta.

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<sup>5</sup> Born 1932, he studied singing at the University of Stellenbosch. In 1955 he was a junior lecturer in singing at the College of Music in Cape Town, from where an opera tour took him to London where he then worked for the BBC. During this time he changed from bass-baritone to dramatic tenor and studied in Detmold, Germany from 1960-1963. In 1964 he was contracted to the Kiel opera house and in 1965 to Sadler Wells. He was the head of NAPAC Opera from 1966 to 1989, producing operas mainly in Natal (Jackson 1980: 287).

Rose Barnett sang the role of Mimì on 6 November (Programme 1971i). Du Toit sang the role of Mimì for the first time for the South African Opera Federation in 1959 in Afrikaans. In 1969 she sang the role of Musetta in the same opera.

The music critic “N” (probably George Nisbet?) reviewed 1971’s “Sparkling Mimì [sic] by Miss Du Toit”:

*As if we needed further proof of what a great opera star she is after Lucia, Miss du Toit as Mimì was perfection itself [...] In radiant voice, Miss du Toit sang the moments of tragedy beautifully, with just the right touch of frailty on occasion and a touch of doom tacked on to every entrance. The luminous beauty she hung on to “O soave fanciulla”, “Sì, mi chiamano Mimì [sic]” and the touching Act III duet just about stopped the show.*

Coleman (1971) commented on the performance in the Churchill Theatre in Pietermaritzburg:

*The evening was dominated by the truly thrilling performance of Nellie du Toit as Mimì [sic]. Hers is not a big voice in the sense of opera but is so finely trained and exquisitely used as to create a memory that will not easily be erased. Align this with considerable acting ability and ease and Miss du Toit’s portrayal is seen to contain all the requirements for well-deserved success.*

## 7.2 THE YEAR 1972

Two new roles were in store for Nellie du Toit in 1972, namely the title role in Bellini’s *Norma* for PACOFS in Bloemfontein in March, and Mozart’s Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* for PACT in July – sung in English. The other two operas she was to sing for CAPAB that year were *Lucia di Lammermoor*<sup>6</sup> in January and *Madama Butterfly* in May, for which she would later be awarded her first Nederburg Opera Prize.

### *Norma (Norma)* – PACOFS

James Conrad’s production of Bellini’s *Norma* opened on 7 March 1972 in the State Theatre in Bloemfontein. The Durban Symphony Orchestra was under the baton of Franco Ferraris. Nicola Cencherle sang the role of Pollione opposite Du Toit’s *Norma*, while Øystein Liltved was Oroveso. Bets Botha sang the role of Adalgisa (Programme 1972c). In his letter to Du Toit, wishing her luck on opening night, James Conrad (1972) mentioned that *Norma* is truly her “Oscar” role.

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<sup>6</sup> CAPAB’s 1971/1972 summer season included the Fiasconaro production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* which opened on 5 January 1972 at the Nico Malan Opera House. Nellie du Toit and Jeanette Bezuidenhout were double-cast in the lead. Franco Ferraris was the conductor (Programme 1972a). As Du Toit had to undergo a gall bladder operation (Du Toit 2002e) the opening night was sung by Jeanette Bezuidenhout who mentioned that another soprano had to be flown in from Europe to alternate with her [Bezuidenhout] in the remaining performances (Harris [née Bezuidenhout] 2002).

Dirkie de Villiers (D. de V. 1972) commented in *Die Volksblad* on Nellie du Toit's brilliant *Norma*. He praised her dramatic art, her technical and vocal finish as well as her unselfish engagement with her co-singers that would have graced any opera stage worldwide. He emphasised three unforgettable qualities: her pure ornamental melismas, her musical chest notes that were never rough and the absolute relaxed attitude towards her performance. (See the original Afrikaans review in Appendix XI.) Edward Aitchison (1972) reviewed Du Toit's "triumph as Norma [...] a performance that could hold itself [*sic*] anywhere in the world", as follows:

*Top honours must go to Nellie du Toit. True, this was not a Norma in strictest Italian tradition of Callas and Sutherland, but a refreshing individual portrayal, human and ultimately convincing. Spectacular are her vocal achievements – one moment soaring triumphantly over tutti choir and orchestra and then again those incredibly beautiful pianissimo passages.*

Philippa Breytenbach from *Die Transvaler* (1972a) remarked that Nellie du Toit's portrayal of *Norma* was a performance seldom heard in opera. She agreed with De Villiers on Du Toit's sympathetic, unselfish approach to her co-singers as well as on the fact that the orchestra swamped her pianissimo singing in "Casta diva". For Breytenbach the second act featured the artistic abilities of this fine singer as never before – her acting and singing had the audience on the edge of their seats from sheer admiration. In the duets with Adalgisa, both singers delivered fine singing. This is where Du Toit showed her magnanimity as artist. She never tried to exploit the inexperience of Bets Botha in order to outshine her, but supported her in a way one rarely finds among artists on stage. (See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.) Breytenbach then puts the question of why the Transvaal opera management does not select operas which could be vehicles for the excellence and abilities of Du Toit (as a Transvaal-based singer) who was delivering her best performances in the other three provinces.

The performance in the Ernest Oppenheimer Theatre in Welkom on 21 March 1972 was equally well received. The critic T.D.F. (1972) stated that in this role, which is a supreme test for the true tragic soprano, Nellie du Toit - after some tightness in the first act - rendered a memorable emotional experience. Her fervent singing showed a crystalline clarity, which was only occasionally tinged with hardness when under extreme strain.

### ***Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) – CAPAB***

The production by Gregorio Fiasconaro of *Madama Butterfly*, which opened on 27 May 1972, was the fourth of six productions in a total of eight seasons in which Du Toit sang the role of Cio-Cio-San<sup>7</sup>. David Tidboald conducted the CAPAB Orchestra. Du Toit was double cast with Leonore Veenemans who sang four performances. Michael Trimbel and Luigi Bianco shared the role of Pinkerton, Sarita Stern was Suzuki, George Kok sang Goro, Øystein Liltved was Bonze and Hans van Heerden was Sharpless (Programme 1972d).

The Cape Town newspapers were – again – full of praise. Pieter Kooij (1972) wrote in his critique, entitled “Nellie du Toit great as Butterfly”<sup>8</sup>, that this opera was the most exciting version of any opera presentation by CAPAB in the Nico Malan up to that point in time. According to him, Du Toit was a star who dominated everything and everyone on stage. She was constantly sparkling, fascinating and [musically] moving. Her singing was magnificent and her acting totally convincing. Shortly, Du Toit’s *Butterfly* was the best opera performance in Cape Town since her unforgettable *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Antoinette Silvestri (1972) agreed with Kooij in her review “Bravo, Nellie du Toit”:

*Nellie du Toit’s superb singing and acting in the role of Butterfly is of top international rating. Miss du Toit does not give us the post-card Japanese peachblossom type heroine but portrays a woman of flesh, blood and extraordinary courage. She involves us so deeply in the different phases of Butterfly’s coming-of-age in maturity that when she faces the ultimate truth we cannot but concur with the comment, “Butterfly has grown up and she dies not as a woman afraid of life, but with nobility and honour”.*

*The whole weight of the opera fell on Nellie du Toit. She was wonderful. Her rapturous “Un bel di” swept all before it, and when she sings even a short phrase of Puccini’s rousing American-adapted tunes we feel like rising to our feet and saluting. Her love duet at the end of Act I with Pinkerton was tender to the last degree. This was an artistic experience of high order.*

Steward Young (1972) commented as follows:

*The vociferous ovation accorded Nellie du Toit at her final curtain in Capab’s revival of Puccini’s “Madama Butterfly” (in Italian this time) can have left no doubts in her mind about just how much her re-creation of the title-role had meant to Saturday’s first-night audience.*

*From her first moments on stage her performance had been sustained with absolute conviction, and, at its best, attained moments of near greatness. I do not find it easy to imagine how the painful intensity of her final scenes could be surpassed.*

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<sup>7</sup> To recapitulate: The first *Butterfly* was the 1957 Alexander Rota production. The second production in 1960 by Hermien Dommisie and the third *Butterfly* in 1967 and 1968, produced by Victor Melloney, were sung in English. Du Toit sang eight seasons of this opera (See Appendix IV).

<sup>8</sup> “Nellie du Toit groots as Butterfly”. See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.

In special press reportage about the reception of *Madama Butterfly* and Du Toit's triumph in the Cape, the Transvaal music critic Philippa Breytenbach (1972c) wrote that Du Toit moved people to tears. She also reported the jubilant acclaim which Du Toit – “the pride of the Transvaal” - received in Cape Town's newspapers. (See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans reportage.)

### ***Don Giovanni (Donna Anna) – PACT***

Du Toit's first portrayal of Donna Anna was in Leonard Schach's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* – in English (Peskin 1990:96). It opened on 22 July 1972 in the Aula, Pretoria and on 5 August 1972 at the Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT orchestra. Don Giovanni was sung by Lawrence Folley, Harold Blackburn was Leporello, Alberto Remedios sang the role of Don Ottavio, Ilse Lotz was Donna Elvira, Barbara Veenemans sang Zerlina, Rudi Neitz was Masetto and Øystein Liltved the Commendatore. Costumes and décor were by the Athenian stage designer John Stephanellis (Programme 1972e).

According to Anton van Zyl (1972), *Don Giovanni* was a triumph for Du Toit. He found that the role suited her excellently and that she would be equally at home in the role of Donna Elvira. In his view, her voice had only now gained its full development and lustre. Van Zyl detected a new vocal brilliance and commented that her coloratura passages now were handled with magnificent dexterity. He furthermore stated that Du Toit employed her voice with great subtleness of nuance and thus easily outshone all other singers in this respect, especially in her beautiful rendering of the aria “Non mi dir”. (See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.)

Phyllis Konya (1972) thought “Nellie du Toit was a noble Donna Anna [...] most authoritative in the singing of her aria ‘You know now for certain’”.

Peskin (1990:22) concluded that:

*Nellie du Toit successfully conveyed the tension between serenity and trauma, particularly in her first act duet with Don Ottavio and her two fiendishly difficult arias, “Or sai chi l'onore” and “Non mi dir”, though these were slightly strained. Her performance tended to overwhelm Ilse Lotz' Donna Elvira and to disturb the dramatic balance between the two ladies.*



### 7.3 THE YEAR 1973

In 1973 Du Toit portrayed three opera roles in four productions for the four Arts Councils. The first was Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, in a revival of the 1971 James Conrad production, for PACOFS in Bloemfontein and for NAPAC in Durban.

Her second role was that of the Countess in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (*Die Huwelik van Figaro*) sung in Afrikaans for PACT in a Peter Ebert production. She also sang *Madama Butterfly* for NAPAC in a production by Angelo Gobbato. Early in 1973 Du Toit received her first Nederburg Opera Prize for her portrayal of Cio-Cio-San in the CAPAB production of *Madama Butterfly* in 1972.

#### ***Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) – PACOFS**

Du Toit's second opera for PACOFS in the seventies was a revival of the 1971 James Conrad production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, presented in March 1973. Bryan Balkwill conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. Gé Korsten sang the role of Edgardo, Hans van Heerden sang Enrico, Gert Potgieter was Normanno, Stephen Tudor was Arturo and Øystein Liltved sang Raimondo. Alisa was sung by Jean Stuart (Programme 1973c).

Edward Aitchison (2002b) recalls Du Toit's "rich voice" with a shattering top E [e<sup>3</sup>] flat, and a top D [d<sup>3</sup>] that soared over the orchestra. He thought though that Du Toit's bridge passage, between F sharp and A flat sounded a bit "woolly". According to him she never lost the focus in her voice, but the slenderness of tone ("slankheid"). He summed up Du Toit's visual appearance with the words: "What a presence!"

Later in 1973 Du Toit was one of the nominees for the Nederburg Opera Prize in the Orange Free State on account of her performance in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Unidentified author 1973b).

#### ***Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) – NAPAC**

After the performances for PACOFS, the NAPAC production of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* opened in Durban on 26 April 1973 (Conrad 2001). Bryan Balkwill conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. The cast in the main roles was virtually the same as for the PACOFS production but in Durban, Evelyn Dalberg was heard as Alisa, Bradley Harris portrayed Arturo and Walter Johnson was Normanno ("N").

“Magnificent Lucia by Miss du Toit” was the heading of the review by “N” in the *Daily News* of 27 April 1973. This reviewer was of the opinion that:

*Nellie du Toit's interpretation of Donizetti's ill-used heroine came across with deeper dramatic significance and glorious musicality. This time one did not simply marvel at her technical brilliance and assurance but felt for the character **behind** [sic] the performer.*

*It is in the Mad Scene, of course, that Lucia stands or falls, and here Miss du Toit produced singing that was poised and phrased to perfection. True, there was the momentary lapse of pitch here and there but the scene as a whole was magnificently done.*

*To complete a jewel of a performance Miss du Toit scaled the heights of pathos in “Regnava nel silenzio”, achieving the most subtle effects without ever forcing her tone or pulling a phrase out of shape. In the cabaletta one could only marvel at the ravishing ease of her coloratura, a far cry from the florid chirpings so often shammed off in this role.*

Tim Aitchison (1973) shared “N”'s views on the spectacular “Mad Scene” but felt that:

*Nellie du Toit's Act I was disturbing as she seemed insecure and appeared not to have any heart in her performance. But her scene with Enrico in Act II was good and she went on to improve steadily until her Mad Scene [sic] in Act III was stunning. This Mad Scene [sic] is superlatively good and makes one reiterate for the umpteenth time that Miss du Toit is a singer of the very highest calibre and that by international standards.*

### ***Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) – NAPAC***

The second opera in the 1973 NAPAC season was of *Madama Butterfly*, which opened on 10 May 1973, only two weeks after *Lucia di Lammermoor*<sup>9</sup>. In this new production by Angelo Gobbato, under the baton of Bryan Balkwill, Du Toit sang the title role opposite Gé Korsten as Pinkerton and Evelyn Dalberg as Suzuki. Kenneth Reynolds was Sharpless and Øystein Liltved sang the role of Bonze (Programme 1973d.)

Du Toit (1998) remembers that she was very tired after this *tour de force*, since for her it was extremely tedious to sing in two different *Fach* categories in one season. She sang the dramatic coloratura role of Lucia six times and the *lirico spinto* role of Butterfly eight times in less than a month. (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as Cio-Cio-San.)

### ***Le nozze di Figaro (Contessa Almaviva) – PACT***

On 26 July 1973 the première of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, sung in Afrikaans and presented as *Die Huwelik van Figaro*, took place in the Aula, Pretoria.

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<sup>9</sup> According to the list of NAPAC opera opening nights compiled by Prof. Rosalie Conrad (2001).

There were three more performances on 28 July, 1 and 3 August as well as a school performance on 30 August at the same venue. Johannesburg audiences were treated to this opera in the Civic Theatre on 10, 14, 18, 22 and 24 August, with two school performances on 16 and 20 August. This meant twelve performances altogether in one month. Peter Ebert, of the Hessisches Staatstheater in Wiesbaden (Hartmann 1977: 257), was the producer and Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra. Du Toit sang the role of Countess Almaviva. The cast also included Dawie Couzyn as Figaro, Lawrence Folley as Count Almaviva and Barbara Veenemans as Susanna, Ilse Lotz as Cherubino and Øystein Liltved as Bartolo (Programme 1973f). The opera was transmitted live from the Johannesburg Civic Theatre on Tuesday 14 August 1973 in the SABC's Afrikaans service (Fourie 1973: 11). Du Toit was nominated for the Nederburg Opera Prize in the Transvaal for her performance in this opera (Keill 1974).

#### **7.4 THE YEAR 1974**

Four operas and one operetta lay in store for Nellie du Toit in 1974. For PACT she sang the title roles in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in March/April, as well as in *Norma* in August. She furthermore sang the role of Micaëla in a NAPAC production of *Carmen* in May and added a new role to her repertoire, that of Madeleine de Coigny in the NAPAC production of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* in May. In December she sang Rosalinde in a new production of *Die Fledermaus* for CAPAB.

The year 1974, however, started with an extended trip overseas. Apart from visiting her brother in Phoenix, Arizona, USA, she also paid a visit to London, Vienna, Zurich, Hamburg, Berlin, Paris and New York. Within four weeks she attended fourteen opera performances (Keill 1974). Du Toit mentioned in Keill (1974) that only since the last four years could she make a living out of opera singing, a season in each province being enough, and that she was fully booked till August of the following year.

##### ***Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) – PACT**

A full five years after Nellie du Toit's ravishing performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* for CAPAB in 1969, she could finally be heard in that role in the Transvaal. She sang this role for NAPAC in 1971 and for PACOFS in 1973. Leo Quayle conducted the Neels Hansen production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

The opera opened on 15 March 1974 at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg<sup>10</sup>. Opening night in the Aula, Pretoria was on 4 April<sup>11</sup> (Programme 1974a). The cast included Gé Korsten as Edgardo, Lawrence Folley as Enrico, Rudi Neitz as Raimondo, Ilse Lotz as Alisa, George Kok as Normanno and Jean Armentz as Arturo.

Jozua van der Lugt (1974) compared Du Toit's "Mad Scene" to a branch of heather that could be pressed in a book. For him it was an experience to see how technique was mixed with a feeling for atmosphere and finely planned acting. He mentions that her voice initially took time to warm up but soon showed the beauty cherished by everyone. He found though that Du Toit's dramatic coloratura approach to the role was made at the expense of youthfulness. (See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.)

Rudolf van Alk (1974) mentioned in the heading of his review that a moving *Lucia* brought new fame to PACT and a new climax for Nellie du Toit. He thought that, from the love duet onward, she consistently built up the role. She rose to unknown heights musically as well as dramatically, creating a great unity in the art of interpretation. One could not talk about coloratura in the sense of empty vocal splendour, because every run and *fioritura* was the expression of a state of mind. (See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.)

Peskin (1990: 30), in his opera assessments, compared Du Toit's Lucia to that of Mimi Coertse of 1964. He describes Du Toit's interpretation as darker, fuller voiced and sung with more intense involvement in the character's plight, if less exciting in the vocal embellishments and ornamentations of the music. (One has to keep in mind that Coertse sang this role in the Transvaal at the age of thirty-one and Du Toit at the age of forty-five, an age difference of thirteen years.)

Evaluating the opinions and assessments of the critics, and considering Du Toit's vocal experience, one can conclude that Du Toit's rendition was a deeply felt, mature approach to the portrayal of the young Lucia<sup>12</sup>. Du Toit mentioned in an article by Jeannette Keill (1974) that she had always been considered a lyric soprano, but that in the last five years her voice had "just gone up". She described the role, which she found suited her "down to the ground" as very lyrical with semi-dramatic coloratura passages in between.

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<sup>10</sup> With further performances on 19, 23, 25, 27, 29 March as well as a school performance on 21 March.

<sup>11</sup> With four more performances on 6, 8, 10 and 13 April.

<sup>12</sup> Compare with the view of Angelo Gobbato, Chapter 10.

### ***Andrea Chénier* (Madeleine) – NAPAC**

Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* had its first ever performance and première in South Africa on 18 May in Durban's Alhambra Theatre - barely a month after *Lucia di Lammermoor*. James Conrad was the producer and Franco Ferraris conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. Du Toit sang the role of Madeleine de Coigny<sup>13</sup>, Gé Korsten the title role and Kenneth Reynolds the role of Charles Gérard (Programme 1974b). (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as Madeleine.)

“New opera a great artistic enterprise” was the apt heading of Tim Aitchison's review in the *Natal Mercury* of 21 May 1974. With reference to Nellie du Toit, Aitchison thought that she sang beautifully as Maddalena, especially in Act 3. Her acting also impressed him. He felt though that the role didn't suit her quite as much as did Lucia or Butterfly.

“Sparkling Korsten is star of stylish ‘Chénier’” is the heading of an undated review, in which an unidentified author (1974b) comments: “As Maddalena, Nellie du Toit brought delicacy and seriousness to the role as well as scrupulous musicality.”

Dr Du Toit (2002e) recalls that she found this role difficult. Apart from being vocally taxing in order to do justice to the music, the role required appropriate acting abilities. The aria “La mamma morta”, asks for dramatic and emotional involvement which creates the risk of oversinging. It was certainly not an easy task to act appropriately while involved in dramatic singing (Du Toit 2002e).

James Conrad feels that Du Toit reached the utmost limit (“äusserste Grenze”) of her voice in the difficult role of Madeleine, which some people thought she would not be able to do. In his judgement both Du Toit and Korsten scored their biggest triumph in this opera. Conrad made a live private recording of the seventh and last performance, which has been remastered on CD for private use (Conrad 2002b). It also documents the enthusiastic and remarkably lengthy audience applause.

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<sup>13</sup> The programme refers to the French version of the role, Madeleine, although the opera was sung in Italian, where the character is known as Maddalena.

### ***Carmen (Micaëla)* – NAPAC**

In the revival of James Conrad's 1972 *Carmen* production, presented in May 1974 at the Alhambra Theatre in Durban, Du Toit sang the role of Micaëla to Gé Korsten's Don José (Conrad 2002c). The review by Marilynne Holloway (1974) commented that Du Toit excelled in the role of Micaëla, delivering a polished performance in which she conveyed "the calm strength of the character with winning assurance". John Pryce-Jones was the conductor.

### ***Norma (Norma)* – PACT**

PACT must have felt proud to engage Dino Yannopoulos for their 1974 season of Bellini's *Norma*. This Greek stage director of international renown who had been with the New York Metropolitan Theatre from 1945 to 1966, had also produced *Norma* with Maria Callas. The famous international soprano Montserrat Caballé was originally contracted to sing Norma for PACT, but was released from the contract when Paris offered her a new production of the same opera (Peskin 1990: 33).

Du Toit sang the role of Norma with an international cast: Bruno Prevedi as Pollione, Nicola Zaccaria as the High Priest Oroveso and Mirna Pecile in the role of Adalgisa. The South African singers George Kok and Ravonne Swart sang the roles of Flavio and Clotilde respectively. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra. The opening night was on 2 August 1974 in the Aula Pretoria, with further performances on 6, 8, and 10 August. On 16 August *Norma* opened in Johannesburg Civic Theatre and had six more performances namely on 19, 21, 23, 27, 29 and 31 August, thus eleven performances in total (Peskin 1990: 97; Programme 1974c).

Peskin (1990: 31-32) writes that Du Toit fulfilled many of the requirements for the role of Norma. He refers to the opinion of the conductor Richard Bonyngé, husband of Joan Sutherland - who also delivered a Norma of repute - that this role requires almost too much of one soprano: the greatest dramatic ability and *bel canto* technique, superhuman emotional resources as well as a voice of quality and size. According to Peskin, there were some shortcomings in Du Toit's performance, which prevented a total identification with the role. (This could also have been attributed to the fact that she was ill at the time of singing *Norma*.)

*A commanding stage presence, she provided some lovely mezza voce effects, but there was a lack of evenness in the vocal range and her coloratura work was strained. Her enunciation of Italian, so crucial to a proper projection of this role, was not always adequate.*

Du Toit commented in Odendaal (1976a) that the role of Norma suited her voice well, but unfortunately, she had a cold and for the last two performances was replaced by Maria-Luisa Cioni, whose voice, according to Peskin (1990: 32), was too small for the role.

### ***Die Fledermaus (Rosalinde)* – CAPAB**

Angelo Gobbato's production of the operetta *Die Fledermaus* opened in the Nico Malan Opera House on 31 December 1974. David Tidboald conducted the CAPAB Orchestra.

This was the third *Fledermaus* production for Du Toit. Gé Korsten sang the role of Alfred, Suzanne Davies was cast as Adele and Lawrence Folley sang the role of Eisenstein. Hans van Heerden and Philip de Vos sang the roles of Falke and Blind. Fred Dalberg and Evelyn Dalberg portrayed the roles of Frosch and Prince Orlofsky (Programme 1974e).

Pieter Kooij (1975) attended the New Year's eve performance but thought that the sparkle was in the glass and not so much in the production as such. He also pointed out that Du Toit was inappropriately cast in the role of Rosalinde, as often was the case at CAPAB. He thought that this talented singer, unforgettable in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Madama Butterfly*, was in any case not heard often enough in the Cape and he wondered why she should be offered roles that are unsuited to her voice and acting abilities.

## **7.5 THE YEAR 1975**

The year 1975 was to be one of Nellie du Toit's busiest opera years. She performed in five operas and one operetta. The physical and vocal exertion due to a demanding schedule brought her to the verge of exhaustion. She practically sang non-stop between March and August, with only a small break before her next opera in October. Two new Puccini roles lay in store for her: the title role in *Tosca* for PACOFS in Bloemfontein and Welkom in March and, following closely, Liù in *Turandot* for NAPAC in Durban in May. In addition, there was a revival of *Andrea Chénier* in Durban sung parallel with *Turandot*. After a short break in June, Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* for PACT opened in mid-July. In October there were seven performances of *Il trovatore* for NAPAC as well as in Sasolburg for the opening of the Etienne Rousseau Theatre.

Du Toit's concert commitments in 1975 included, among others, the soprano part in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in June as well as a concert with the SABC Orchestra in August.

In 1975 Du Toit was the recipient of the Nederburg Opera Prize in the Transvaal for her portrayal of Lucia in PACT's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1974. In 1975 she was also awarded the Nederburg Opera Prize in the Orange Free State for her portrayal of Tosca in PACOFS' *Tosca* the same year. (See heading 7.10 for detail).

### ***Tosca (Tosca) – PACOFS***

In March 1975 Du Toit took her first bow as Floria Tosca, a role she had been looking forward to with great anticipation (Keill 1974). The Conrad Haikes production opened on 1 March 1975 in the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre. Bryan Balkwill conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. Gé Korsten was Mario Cavaradossi and Hans van Heerden sang the role of Baron Scarpia. Sigmund Rabe was the Sacristan and Øystein Liltved sang the role of Cesare Angelotti. There were six more performances: on 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15 March respectively as well as three performances in the Ernest Oppenheimer Theatre in Welkom on 18, 20 and 22 March. Gudrun Barrella, who was double cast in the role of Tosca, sang the performances on 3 and 20 March (Programme 1975a).

For Du Toit this meant eight performances in three weeks, a stressful time for a voice. Dr Du Toit (2002e) commented on the role of Tosca as being “fantastic” since it had a convenient *tessitura* with only a few interspersed high notes. It is also a wonderful acting role. She regretted that she sang Tosca only in one season, having worked very hard on it. According to her colleague Gé Korsten, Du Toit found the role of Tosca a new challenge in her *lirico spinto* repertoire<sup>14</sup>, although not more strenuous than - for example - *Madama Butterfly*. The fact that the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre has an auditorium of only 488 seats might be a factor in Du Toit's success with the role, according to the conductor David Tidboald (2002). He doubted that she would have sung it as successfully in a big theatre because in his opinion Du Toit was not a true dramatic soprano (as in the case of Joyce Barker for example).

“Tosca is a triumph for Nellie”<sup>15</sup>. Under this title D. de. V. (Dirkie de Villiers) reviewed the opening night of *Tosca* in *Die Vaderland* of 3 March 1975. His comment, translated into English stated:

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<sup>14</sup> Kloiber and Konold (1985: 639) allocate the role of Tosca to a dramatic or *jugendlich dramatisch* soprano. According to Rosenthal, Warrack and Alberti (1991: 850) Tosca resorts to the category *soprano lirico spinto*, which according to him is the equivalent for dramatic soprano.

<sup>15</sup> “Tosca is 'n triomf vir Nellie”. See Appendix XI for original Afrikaans review.



*To sing Vissi d'arte almost perfectly is already an achievement. To be able to carry through consequently [...] every nuance, every run and melodic turn, every movement on stage without a perceivable mistake or hesitation, or loss of rapport with the audience, from Tosca's first entry to the end, is characteristic of a great operatic artist [...] That she made a musical and striking success of this tour de force in her first attempt at this role underlines her achievement.*

### **Andrea Chénier (Madeleine de Coigny) – NAPAC**

Just over a month lay between Du Toit's last performance of *Tosca* on 22 March and the opening night of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* in Durban on 1 May 1975, a revival of the 1974 James Conrad production. Franco Ferraris again conducted the performances which were on 3, 10 and 17 May for White audiences and on 20 May for Indian and Coloured audiences<sup>16</sup> in Durban. On 26 May the opera was performed at the Winston Churchill Theatre in Pietermaritzburg. The cast was substantially the same as in the previous year, with Gé Korsten as Andrea Chénier, Nellie du Toit as Madeleine and Kenneth Reynolds as Charles Gérard according to *Napac News* (Unidentified author 1975b).

The Durban critics Lynne Kelly (1975) and "N" (1975) were unanimous that Du Toit's highlight was her rendition of the aria "La mamma morta". Kelly thought that her acting and voice were as assured as ever, though she thought this was not Nellie du Toit's best operatic role. The music critic "N" of *The Daily News* of 2 May 1975 commented on Du Toit's "incisive singing" under the heading "Du Toit lit up Chénier", saying:

*It was left to Nellie du Toit [...] to really get the revolution launched as an attack on the emotions as well as a verismo spectacular. Throughout she produced a near flawless emission of tone as well as a superb characterisation of the aristocratic Madeleine: warmth and beauty in the lower register and a strong and well placed upper register which soared effortlessly in "La mamma morta" without sighing or sobbing.*

### **Turandot (Liù) – NAPAC**

Only a week after *Andrea Chénier* opened, Nellie du Toit took her bow in the role of Liù in Puccini's *Turandot* in Durban on 7 May 1975. According to *Napac News* (Unidentified author 1975) the distinguished Iranian producer Enayat Rezai made his South African debut with this opera. Franco Ferraris conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. His wife, Lucia Ferraris-Kelston, sang the title role. Gé Korsten sang the role of Calaf, Øystein Liltved was Timur and Louis van der Walt sang the role of Emperor Altoum (Programme 1975b).

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<sup>16</sup> This illustrates how the racial segregation policy affected the cultural scene. The Nico Malan Opera House in Cape Town in 1974 was officially opened to all races (Eichbaum 1988e).

### ***Le nozze di Figaro (Contessa Almaviva) – PACT***

This was Du Toit's third season of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* sung in Afrikaans – a revival of the 1973 production by Peter Ebert. The first one was the Josef Witt production in 1963. All three productions were sung for PACT. The reason why PACT again opted for the Afrikaans version, was to honour the contribution of the pioneers of the Afrikaans language a hundred years earlier (Programme 1975d).

Of the twelve performances in one month, five took place in Pretoria's Aula: on 16, 18 and 26 July, with school performances on the 22 and 24 July. The Johannesburg performances were on 2, 8, 12, 14 and 16 August with 4 and 6 August being school performances. The cast included Dawie Couzyn as Figaro and Lawrence Folley as Count Almaviva. Rikie Venter, Du Toit's student, sang the role of Susanna while Ravonne Swart was Cherubino. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra (Programme 1975d).

Danie Fourie (1975) commented that Du Toit could always overwhelm any audience with her controlled and moving characteristics as a singing actress. He remarked that her voice had a wonderful brightness, especially in the high register, as could be heard in the excellently sung aria "Porgi amor". Fourie considered her singing "impressive".

In the *Pretoria News* of 17 July 1975 Mary Rörich (1975) commented that:

*Nellie du Toit's portrayal as the Countess was perhaps the best performance of the evening. She alone of the entire cast knew exactly what she wanted to make of her role. And her dignified bearing and tragic air of aggrieved virtue became her well. Despite a certain hardness of tone, she shone vocally too.*

Wouter de Wet (1975) of *Die Transvaler* compared Du Toit's performance to the one of two years previously, which he thought sounded tentative and over cautious. He concluded that she now looked much more relaxed and that the role suited her. She moved well and sang beautifully with a praiseworthy legato line although this was at the cost of perfect diction, which could be forgiven in the light of the wonderful effect created by Du Toit. He thought both arias to be examples of excellent Mozart singing.

### ***Il trovatore* (Leonora) – NAPAC**

After the Peter Ebert production of 1964 and 1966 for PACT, Du Toit's third portrayal of Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore* was with James Conrad as producer and John Pryce-Jones as conductor. Opening night was on 7 October in the Alhambra Theatre in Durban (Programme 1975e). There were seven performances in twelve days. Gé Korsten sang Manrico opposite Nellie du Toit's Leonora, Kenneth Reynolds was Conte di Luna while Azucena was double cast with Adriana Stamenova and Evelyn Dalberg. Ben Illeman was Ferrando. The same production was presented on 24 October 1975 at the official opening of the Etienne Rousseau Theatre in Sasolburg (Programme 1975f). However, Du Toit had to cancel after the first performance because she fell ill (De Wet 1976a). This was her second cancellation due to ill health within just over a year. The previous time Du Toit had been taken ill was in August 1974 during a performance of *Norma* for PACT. She was replaced on short notice by Maria-Luisa Cioni, who had to be flown in from Europe, because there was no understudy for her role.

Du Toit said in an interview with Thys Odendaal (1976a) that *Norma* suited her voice well, but that she unfortunately contracted a cold. She added laconically that she probably would have to learn to live with such a situation. The ensuing three-month break, which Du Toit took from singing after *Il trovatore*, gave rise to speculations in opera circles that she had developed vocal problems.

De Wet (1976a)<sup>17</sup> reported that Du Toit refuted these speculations. She explained that she had merely been tired, had suffered a cold and had decided to rest a while. She had sung seven Leonoras within twelve days in Durban prior to her Sasolburg engagement. That was tough and very tiring. On top of that she [already] had a cold but had no other choice but to sing, because there was nobody to substitute her (Odendaal 1976a).

This illustrates not only the almost super-human demands that were made of opera singers in main roles, but also the fact that the Arts Councils did not arrange for understudies in principal roles. It also raises the question whether there was no one of Du Toit's calibre available, or whether it was a monetary expedience at the cost of a singer who was very loyal to her audience and always demanded the utmost from herself in order to serve the art of singing.

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<sup>17</sup> "Nellie had maar net verkoue!". "Nadat sy haar verlede Oktober van die produksie van *Il Trovatore* [*sic*] in Sasolburg onttrek het, het die sopraan Nellie du Toit drie maande lank nie gesing nie. 'Dit is nie waar dat ek 'n vokale krisis beleef het nie', vertel die sopraan. 'Ek was moeg, ek het 'n verkoue gehad, en toe het ek besluit om net 'n bietjie te rus.'"

## 7.6 THE YEAR 1976

At forty-six Nellie du Toit was in the prime of her career, despite some signs of exhaustion from overwork that had come to the fore late in 1975. At this stage, she could look back on 25 years of dedication and hard work in all spheres of singing. She had once or twice uttered the desire to stop singing in a few years' time. After the three-month break from singing in 1975, she was fit again for the year that lay ahead.

In an interview with Nellie du Toit for *Beeld* by Thys Odendaal (1976a), she described how her voice had changed over the years. She had started as a soubrette, had then moved into the lyrical *Fach*, after which she obtained coloratura abilities and had then developed dramatic qualities. Du Toit also expressed her reservation about singing operas in translations, except for comic operas whose intricate intrigues justified a translation.

She told Odendaal that she would need four instead of three months of preparation for the role of Jenůfa. Du Toit also expressed her love for lieder but said that a singer cannot make a living exclusively from recitals. She also said that she once gave a recital in the middle of an opera season but that she would never do it again, since lieder and opera are divergent genres.

Wouter de Wet (1976a) in *Die Transvaler* of 5 March 1976 comments on Du Toit's interpretation of Puccini's music. She found it hard to project Puccini's music after having sung a coloratura role, since it required the use of another kind of resonance. She had often been asked whether she was not afraid of ruining her voice in this way, to which she replied that she knew the difference between "big singing" and "big shouting".

Puccini's *La bohème* for PACT and *Madama Butterfly* for NAPAC would be two out of four operas that Du Toit was to sing in 1976. Two new additions to her repertoire were Janáček's *Jenůfa* for PACT and Gounod's *Faust* for NAPAC.

### ***La bohème* (Mimi) – PACT**

Puccini's *La bohème*, a restaging of the 1974 Neels Hansen production<sup>18</sup>, this time sung in English, opened in Pretoria on 12 March 1976. Three more Pretoria performances took place on 16, 18 and 20 March.

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<sup>18</sup> Marcella Reale sang the role of Mimi in 1974 (Peskin 1990: 97).

The opening night at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre was on 25 March. Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Orchestra. The cast included Gé Korsten as Rodolfo opposite Nellie du Toit's Mimi, Gwilym Evans as Marcello, Rita Roberts as Musetta, Harold Blackburn as Colline and Ian Donald as Schaunard. Du Toit's student, Rikie Venter, was double cast in the role of Mimi for one performance (Programme 1976a).

Thys Odendaal (1976b) criticised the use of the English translation of the opera and Leo Quayle's insensitive ("ongevoelige") conducting. He also disliked the character Mimi's unnecessary movements, which he felt were unsuited to the requirements of the character. Odendaal, in fact, felt unhappy about all the main characters. In his view Du Toit's vocal approach to her role was, at times, over cautious and disrupted the dramatic balance of this difficult role. He was also of the opinion that she was singing "on technique". But, in spite of this, he found her significant voice projection and excellent diction once again remarkable.

Vivien Allen (1976) under the heading "Nellie saves Bohème" was very positive about Du Toit's rendering of the role. From a vocal point of view Du Toit gave her "pure joy from start to finish" and could "produce a *mezza voce* of such beauty that one surrenders entirely to it". Marianne Becker (1976), however, was disappointed at times by incomprehensible intonation problems encountered by the experienced Korsten and Du Toit.

Performances in Johannesburg were on 25, 27, 30 March, 3, 7 and 9 April with Rikie Venter singing the role of Mimi on 3 April. The Johannesburg première on 25 March again confirmed that Du Toit dominated the stage vocally as well as dramatically. Henning Viljoen (1976a) found Du Toit to be the "nucleus of *La Bohème* [*sic*]"<sup>19</sup> and that her voice had gained a lovely darker quality, which would actually make her more suited to a Tosca than to Mimi. Viljoen thought she succeeded in a moving way to convey the role of Mimi in all its more subtle and tender nuances.

Philip Miller (1976) of *The Star* wrote: "Unquestionably Nellie du Toit's Mimi [*sic*] carried the opera. Hers was a gem of a performance surrounded by paste. Act I found her cautious but from then on she came into her own." In the view of Harold Steafel (1976), the part of Mimi is tricky because the singer has to portray an ailing young girl.

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<sup>19</sup> "Nellie die kern van *La Bohème* [*sic*]" – "Nellie du Toit wie se stem deesdae 'n pragtige donker kwaliteit bygekry het (wat haar eintlik meer geskik maak vir 'n Tosca as Mimi [*sic*]), het daarin geslaag om die rol van Mimi [*sic*] in al sy fynere tere nuances aangryp oor te dra."

He asked whether it is appropriate for the singer to “sing full voice at any time or only sometimes, when the situation calls for waning strength”. He thought that it was important to keep a balance “with an appreciation of the musical impact and without the logic of the situation being lost”. Steafel judged that Du Toit kept this balance well in mind.

### ***Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) – NAPAC***

Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* for NAPAC had six performances in Durban’s Alhambra Theatre, starting on 6 May 1976, and a single performance in Pietermaritzburg in the Winston Churchill Theatre on 26 May 1976 according to *South African Digest* (Unidentified author 1976a). The Iranian director Enayat Rezai, who produced *Turandot* for NAPAC in 1975, staged the opera. Luigi Bianco sang Pinkerton and Jean Stuart sang Suzuki. John Pryce-Jones conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra (Programme 1976c).

### ***Jenůfa (Jenůfa) – PACT***

An opera that definitely had an impact on the public and on Nellie du Toit, is Leos Janáček’s *Jenůfa*, which in 1976 was to be presented for the first time in South Africa. Leo Quayle mentioned in an interview with Joe Sack (1976b) that *Jenůfa* introduces a totally new approach to music drama [which is] “a logical extension of Verdi’s ‘*opera verismo*’”.

Leo Quayle conducted the PACT Symphony Orchestra in this PACT production by Ande Anderson of Covent Garden (Sapa 1976). This Czech opera was sung in the English translation by Edward Downes and Otokar Kraus. The four main characters were sung by Du Toit as *Jenůfa*, Evelyn Dalberg as *Kostelnička*, Gé Korsten as *Laca Klemeň* and George Kok as *Števa Buryja*. Stella Beder sang the role of Grandmother Buryja, Rikie Venter was *Jano* and Barbara Veenemans was *Karolka*. The three performances in Pretoria’s Aula were on 16, 22 and 24 July. Five performances were given in the Johannesburg Civic Theatre, namely on 30 July, 5, 7, 12 and 14 August. There were also three school performances on 14 and 20 July and on 3 August – eleven performances in almost four weeks<sup>20</sup>. (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as *Jenůfa*.) This opera again made headlines for Nellie du Toit, who received the highest accolades from press critics, with the exception of Van Alk (1976).

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<sup>20</sup> *Jenůfa* was recorded for the SABC and broadcast on 3 November 1976 (Unidentified author 1976c, *Family Radio & TV*). This broadcast ended Du Toit’s heavy singing schedule of four full seasons, in one of her busiest years as a South African opera singer.

The story line of *Jenůfa* is perhaps not well known in South Africa and will be outlined here: the rogue, Števa Buryja, and his stepbrother, Laca Klemeň, live in the mill of Grandmother Buryja. Their cousin Jenůfa, daughter of the Kostelnička, the sexton, expects Števa's child. The Kostelnička forbids him to marry Jenůfa until he has proved his worth by a year's total abstinence. Laca tries to get closer to Jenůfa but on being repelled, slashes her face with a knife. When Jenůfa secretly gives birth to a son, the Kostelnička - tormented by the disgrace - sends for Steva to marry Jenůfa. He refuses.

Laca, shocked when hearing about Števa's child, is willing to marry Jenůfa. The Kostelnička tells that the child has died, but drowns it in the brook, so that the marriage could be concluded. When Jenůfa and Laca are about to be married, news comes that the body of a baby has been found. Jenůfa realizes the truth and reveals whose baby it is. To save her from being accused, the Kostelnička steps forward and confesses her guilt, comforted by Jenůfa's forgiveness. Finally, Jenůfa and Laca pledge their love (Warrack and West 1994: 361-362).

The well-known pianist, accompanist and music journalist Hennie Joubert (1976), in *Hoofstad* of 20 July 1976, gave a detailed review of this exceptional opera, which centres on a "budding psychological situation". Joubert attributes the success of the singers also to Janáček's highly intelligent music. In his view Du Toit (and Korsten) proved once more why they could be counted among the most secure stalwarts of opera in South Africa. They succeed in virtually every role into which they step; so much the more in the case of the inspiration drawn from the challenges offered by Janáček's *Jenůfa*.

David Oberholzer (1976) wrote after the Pretoria opening night in the *Pretoria News* that "Nellie du Toit made the most beautiful sounds [...] specifically in her middle vocal register: sounds that were well placed, gloriously coloured and thrilling".

The critic of *Die Transvaler* of 19 July 1976 (Unidentified author 1976a) thought that *Jenůfa* was a triumph for PACT and that Du Toit excelled all her previous performances in terms of her singing and acting. This critic assessed Du Toit's portrayal of the title role as the climax of an honourable career. He/she thought that Du Toit and Korsten had entered a dramatic *Fach* and that the Arts Councils should make proper use of this.

For Thys Odendaal (1976c) *Jenufa* was an emotional experience, with Du Toit and Dalberg – in the second act – who delivered singing and acting that were deeply moving. Both depicted these highly emotional character roles with almost unnerving dedication. With their artistry they uncovered the greatness of Janáček’s art.

After the Johannesburg première on 30 July, Henning Viljoen’s (1976c) assessment of Du Toit’s *Jenufa* verged on the ecstatic. He concluded that she not only surpassed her previous achievements but also demonstrated why she was known as South Africa’s undervalued (“miskende”) diva.

With this portrayal she could conquer a place on any international opera stage. She portrayed a *Jenufa* with a childlike faith and a naïve trust, which came to the fore in the prayer in the second act, a moment which he himself experienced as one of the most moving in any opera.

Wouter de Wet (1976b) also was convinced of Du Toit’s excellence and greatness as *Jenufa*. The caption of the press photo, adjacent to his review, stated that Du Toit gave one of the best interpretations of her career in the title role of *Jenufa*.

After the Johannesburg performance, Thys Odendaal (1976d) again found the production of *Jenufa* a memorable chapter in South African opera. He thought that Du Toit gave an example of her experienced artistry. An excerpt of his review in Afrikaans is translated here:

*Du Toit made a more mature and sensitive person of Jenufa [sic] as one would have imagined initially – an example of her intense (“deurleefde”) artistry. It was moving to see and perceive her numerous mood swings. In the first act she looked for Stewa’s [sic] love and rejected Laca forthwith. In the second act she showed the love for her little son with tenderness, and stood in shrill contrast against her mother Kostelnicka [sic]. Her last duet with Gé Korsten as Laca was a heart-stirring moment - that almost bewildered retrospect in the room where she had to endure so much sorrow.*

Joe Sack (1976c) thought that “Janáček’s *Jenufa* [sic] is to earlier opera verismo what raw cane spirit is to matured cognac”. Du Toit’s powerful interpretation made *Jenufa* credible and aroused the audience’s sympathy for the character.

“Nellie du Toit makes *Jenufa* [sic] a credible person; although at times there was insufficient volume, she sang well”, was the opinion of Margaret D. Nabarro (1976).



Du Toit's Jenůfa was "sympathetic [...] quiet, resigned and extraordinarily moving in the end" according to the musicologist and critic, Mary Rörich (1976).

Jozua van der Lugt (1976) certainly took up the cudgels on Du Toit's behalf. He wrote that she had no equal on the South African opera stage and this with regard to all parameters of artistry: voice, interpretation, and depth. Her Jenůfa once more proved this to him. He furthermore wondered if people had a true cognition of Nellie du Toit's exact worth. From this critic's writing, it seems as though Du Toit's capacities were underestimated. One gets the impression that the South African opera world in general was so used to her excellent artistry that they took her immense contribution to opera and singing for granted.

That the role of Jenůfa certainly suited Du Toit's voice is clear from the writing of William Charlton-Perkins (1976) whose review appeared in the magazine *To the Point*. He thought that after having sung Italian roles previously, her voice now "came into its own". For Charlton-Perkins "she encompassed the full spectrum of the role's requirements", portraying the transition from an innocent girl in love with a weak character, to a sublime young woman who is able to forgive after transcending the pain inflicted on her. He continued:

*Not since her Donna Anna of a few years back have I heard such lovely sounds and exquisite phrasing uttered by this singer. In two instances she was especially impressive. In Act Two, in the serene, hushed music that follows Kostelnicka's [sic] great outburst, leading to her defection with Jenůfa's baby, Miss du Toit invested her scene with immense, throatcatching poignancy. The final moments of the opera, as she sings out gloriously, in a great cathartic outburst: 'O Laca, my heart... Love led me to you...[sic]' were among the most memorable in opera I can recall.*

Van Alk's (1976) criticism of Du Toit in the main role is therefore completely contradictory to the overall enthusiasm of the other critics. He judged the choice of Du Toit for the title role as being very problematic. Referring to the role in terms of "jugendlich-dramatisch", he found Du Toit's singing neither youthful nor dramatic. He felt that the simple youthful spontaneity, which to his mind is fundamental to this role, was missing; and therefore also the true emotion.

He was furthermore annoyed by the articulation movements of Du Toit's lower jaw and found her "articulation" sharp and shrill (*sic*). He found that her voice was not big enough in order to realise the dramatic climax and thought that she looked older than her stepmother. In the light of the overwhelmingly positive assessments of Du Toit's singing, acting and artistry as Jenůfa, this review sounds incongruous.

### ***Faust* (Marguerite) – NAPAC**

After her splendid achievements in *Jenůfa*, Du Toit had two months before her next big new role: Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*<sup>21</sup>. James Conrad produced the opera for NAPAC. Opening night was 9 October 1976 in Durban's Alhambra Theatre. John Pryce-Jones conducted the Durban Symphony Orchestra. The cast comprised Gé Korsten in the title role and Øystein Liltved in the role of Mephistopheles (Programme 1976g). (See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as Marguerite.)

George Nisbet (1976) of the *Daily News* thought that Du Toit was “never quite at her best”, her voice being a touch too heavy and occasionally shrill in *mezza voce* passages. Nevertheless, he found her simple approach to the role of Marguerite “perfectly valid and more appealing as the night wore on”. He found the ballad sung with expression and her “Jewel Song” brilliant and stylish.

Lynne Kelly (1976) of the *Natal Mercury* commented on Du Toit's “unfailing commitment to Marguerite” and her “soaring” through the Jewel Song, but found her movements sometimes awkward.

## **7.7 THE YEAR 1977**

The year 1977 would stand in sharp contrast to Nellie du Toit's opera activities of the previous few years; years that can be regarded as the pinnacle of her career. In 1977 she would only sing in Verdi's *La traviata* and *Otello*, both for CAPAB. It was to be Du Toit's first experience as Desdemona, after having sung the famous “Willow Song” and “Ave Maria” on several occasions with orchestral accompaniment.

### ***La traviata* (Violetta) – CAPAB**

Verdi's *La traviata* opened at the Nico Malan Opera in Cape Town on 14 January 1977. The last performance was on 5 February 1977. This was the second restaging of Gregorio Fiasconaro's production of 1973 and 1974. David Tidboald conducted the CAPAB Orchestra. The young American tenor John Steward sang the role of Alfredo Germont, while the Stellenbosch baritone Bernhard de Clerk made his debut as Georgio Germont (Programme 1977a).

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<sup>21</sup> Incidentally the only two operas to be presented in French by the Arts Councils up to 1985 were *Carmen* and *Faust* (“Philoctetes”, 1985: 38).

(See Appendix XII for a photograph depicting Du Toit as Violetta.)

After her first *La traviata* for PACT in 1971, sung in English, Du Toit this time had the opportunity to sing the opera in the original Italian<sup>22</sup>. And in the six years that lay between the two performances, her voice had developed considerably. From pure coloratura soprano roles such as the Queen of the Night and Lucia, she now had entered the more dramatic coloratura or *lirico spinto* *Fach*. There were now darker, more dramatic colours in her voice, notably in the middle and lower registers.

From the beginning, the prospects for *La traviata* were not too favourable. According to an article in *Beeld* of 18 January 1977, Du Toit was unable to finish the dress rehearsal; a sore throat prevented her from continuing after the first act. In spite of this, she sang the première two days later (Unidentified author 1977b). This demonstrates Du Toit's dutiful perseverance, even at the cost of her health.

Pieter Kooij (1977) reviewed the opera in *Die Burger* without, however, mentioning that Du Toit had incurred a cold, which affected her coloratura abilities in the first act. He pointed out that the first act's difficult coloratura passages demand a very supple voice in contrast with the legato lines of the last three acts. Kooij found that Du Toit's voice had become darker, more dramatic, but also slightly less flexible since her unforgettable success in *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Consequently he found her first act singing less successful than that in the other acts. However, her beautiful singing, contrasted by dramatic parts with an exciting strong volume, impressed him, especially in the second act. Kooij (1977b) reviewed the opera in the Transvaal-based newspaper *Beeld* under the heading "Darker, more dramatic but less flexible"<sup>23</sup>.

An unidentified author (1977a) in an article entitled "Cold does not keep Nellie from role"<sup>24</sup> mentioned that Du Toit made a great success of her first *La traviata* in the Cape, despite a cold. The first act was also found to be less successful but Du Toit compensated in the following three acts with some of the most dramatic singing that was ever heard in the Cape. This reviewer also found her voice darker than previously and her acting convincing. Cape critics described the tragic end as "moving".

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<sup>22</sup> Eichbaum (1988: 38) comments on the use of operas in translations: "Certainly the policy of reverting to opera in the vernacular must be construed as being a statement on the part of the managements concerned that they lack faith in their potential audiences."

<sup>23</sup> "Donkerder, dramatieser maar minder soepel".

<sup>24</sup> "Verkoue hou Nellie nie uit rol".

### ***Otello* (Desdemona) – CAPAB**

Verdi's *Otello* opened at the Nico Malan Opera House on 14 May. Gregorio Fiasconaro again was the producer and David Tidboald conducted the CAPAB Orchestra. Giovanni Gibin sang the title role opposite the Desdemona of Nellie du Toit. Hans van Heerden sang Iago, George Kok sang Cassio and Evelyn Dalberg sang Emilia. Eight performances were given: on 14, 17, 20, 23, 28 and 31 May as well as 4 and 6 June (Programme 1977b).

John Benzon (1977) commented on Du Toit's Desdemona that she sang with "great fluency and beauty and looked very good". Pieter Kooij (1977c) reviewed the "very good *Otello* in the Nico". He put it that some people might think Du Toit's voice sounded cold. But he thought that her overall professionalism had been so impressive, the use of her voice so excellent, her acting so convincing and her stage appearance so attractive that even the most critical listener would be impressed by her. Kooij thought Du Toit's interpretation in the last act had been an undoubted victory. Her soft singing, which contrasted with strong outbursts, was very exciting and truly moving.

Antoinette Silvestri (1977) wrote as follows under the heading "A nervy Otello":

*We sense Nellie du Toit's Desdemona lives on a subconscious plane that is totally aware of the madness of Otello but she cannot consciously acknowledge this. Act IV is no "wellpainted passion", no more than any other overture she has made to the man she loves: it is passion itself. We feel she quivers like a leaf in the wind that announces the storm. Latent awareness drives her to sudden changes of mood. Her Salce and Ave Maria are more than beautiful, they are uncanny – her outburst to Emilia (Evelyn Dalberg) is poignant.*

After the eight performances of *Otello* in Cape Town in May, Du Toit could take a good break from opera. Her next role, that of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, would be only ten months hence, in March of the following year.

## **7.8 THE YEAR 1978**

The year 1978 would be a difficult one for Nellie du Toit who would turn forty-nine at the end of that year. Alma Loubser (1978) interviewed her before the première of the operetta *Die Fledermaus*.

In the ensuing article, “Nellie in new Fledermaus”<sup>25</sup>, she reported that Du Toit thought *Die Fledermaus* lends itself to an Afrikaans translation, and should be successful on television. Du Toit also expressed her fondness for lieder and oratorio, and said that she would in the future like to specialise in lieder. She was already planning recitals with her long-standing accompanist, Hennie Joubert. The article mentions Du Toit’s family who always had to put up with her busy schedule.

In an interview with Joe Sack (1976a) for *Rand Daily Mail* of 28 March 1978, Du Toit commented about the role of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*. In a way she thought it a relaxation from heavier roles, because she regarded *Die Fledermaus* “the best of the operettas and the lightest of all the operas”. In another way she found it difficult, because for her it was not easy to adjust from speaking to singing as the role moves from speech to song. “If I pitch my dialogue deep and low, I find my singing becomes heavy immediately after that. It’s only in the second act where Rosalinde becomes Hungarian that this is no problem.”

In his press article, “A singer that would have wanted to give much more”<sup>26</sup>, Thys Odendaal (1978) lifts the curtain to backstage happenings in Du Toit’s involvement in opera. The article insinuated that the Transvaal Arts Council apparently did not want to use Du Toit as much as in the past. Odendaal also reported Du Toit’s wish to sing *bel canto* roles, such as *I puritani* and *Maria Stuarda*, and her view of the opera management who had, according to her, become narrow minded and obdurate. This could be deduced from the constant re-stagings of old productions which were furthermore presented in translations. For Du Toit the presentation of *Jenůfa* by NAPAC had been a new challenge and a light in this “dark monotony”. She mentioned that she had given so much, built up her career, and that it now seemed as if everything had come to a halt.

She pointed out that her voice spanned three octaves but wondered when she could ever put its full capacity to use. Du Toit also commented strongly on the organising of opera in South Africa. Although PACT had planned to present *Don Giovanni* a long time ahead, their offer to her to sing a role in that opera came very late, in fact on the day after she had accepted an offer to sing in a musical in Rhodesia. As she preferred opera to musicals, she would have accepted the PACT offer, even if it was financially less rewarding.

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<sup>25</sup> “Nellie in nuwe Fledermaus”.

<sup>26</sup> “‘n Sanger wat veel meer sou wou gee”.

As can be deduced from Peskin (1991: 99) the role of Donna Anna was sung by Joyce Barker and that of Elvira by Rikie Venter in that production. Du Toit (2002e) could not remember which of the two roles had been offered to her at that stage.

### ***Die Fledermaus (Rosalinde) – PACT***

The first and only stage production for Du Toit that year was the operetta *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss, often mistaken for an opera. This PACT production by Neels Hansen was sung in the new Afrikaans translation by Fred Steyn. Terence Kern conducted the PACT Symphony Orchestra. There were nine performances: three in the Aula, Pretoria on 16, 18, and 22 March 1978 and six performances in the Johannesburg Civic Theatre, namely on 31 March, 4, 8, 10, 12 and 14 April. Gé Korsten sang the role of Eisenstein opposite Nellie du Toit's Rosalinde, Stephen Tudor was Alfred, Barbara Veenemans was Adele, Dawie Couzyn sang Falke, George Kok was Orlofsky and the actor Tobie Cronjé took the role of the jailer (Programme 1978a).

From the start Du Toit sang this season under extreme psychological distress since her brother in the United States, to whom she had always been very close, had died. She had asked to be released from the contract to be able to attend the funeral. This request was not granted probably because there was no understudy to stand in for her.

When Du Toit asked for the “Czardas” to be omitted during the presentation because of her emotional distress, this was wrongly misinterpreted that she had “lost her voice” (Du Toit 2002e). This condition probably accounted for some vocal difficulties during performances.

David Oberholzer (1978) of *The Pretoria News* wrote positively: “Gé Korsten and Nellie du Toit were perfectly happy in their unhappy Eisenstein marriage: Nellie supporting the vocal marriage with her formidable technical abilities, and Gé undermining the actual marriage with seductive vocal charm...”

In his review “Acting and music don’t match”<sup>27</sup>, *Beeld*’s Thys Odendaal (1978b) found the Pretoria production successful to some extent, but otherwise unsatisfactory. He found Du Toit’s Rosalinde in general satisfactory, but wrote that her voice did not complete the persuasive acting of the role. He admitted that she had a pleasant feeling for comical nuances but wondered what the matter was with her voice.

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<sup>27</sup> “Spel en musiek klop nie”.

In his view the role, apart from the “Czardas”, is not taxing, and he wondered why Du Toit had to resort so “desperately” to technique to carry her through the evening. (See original Afrikaans review in Appendix XI.)

Odendaal (1978c) also reviewed the opening night in Johannesburg. The caption of his review was – here translated to English – “Nadir for Nellie du Toit”<sup>28</sup>. His criticism was in no ways constructive. He thought that in general the evening’s performance was “a disappointing affair”, and he hardly left any artist unscathed. Du Toit’s rendition of the “Czardas” he found “catastrophic”. In Odendaal’s view the most upsetting aspect of the evening was Du Toit’s “current form”. (See original Afrikaans review in Appendix XI.)

### **Career at the crossroad**

The devastating review published in *Beeld*, created indignant repercussions in music circles and was partly instrumental in bringing Nellie du Toit’s honourable and distinguished opera career to a halt. But the halt was at a crossroad which would eventually lead to new directions.

*Die Fledermaus* was a trying production for Nellie du Toit in more than one respect. She did apparently encounter some vocal difficulties during the performances as can be deduced from Odendaal (1978d)<sup>29</sup> and she was not in good voice.

After Odendaal’s negative critique, Du Toit’s future contracts to sing in *La traviata* for SWAPAC in Windhoek later that year and in *Der Zigeunerbaron* for PACOFS in 1979 were cancelled. She was replaced by her singing student, Rikie Venter<sup>30</sup> for the Windhoek performances of *La traviata* in June 1978 (Odendaal 1978d).

In an article entitled “Questions that vex, surround singing career of celebrated S.A. soprano”<sup>31</sup> Goosen (1978a) reports that knowledgeable persons thought Du Toit did not perform well because of production faults that positioned her unfavourably on stage. Goosen then asked crucial questions concerning Du Toit’s future in the light of the negative impact the review and ensuing press reports has had on her career.

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<sup>28</sup> “Laagtepunt vir Nellie du Toit”.

<sup>29</sup> “Nellie uit – vervang deur Rikie”.

<sup>30</sup> In the same article Odendaal mentioned that Rikie Venter was contracted to sing *La traviata* with the Wuppertal Opera in Germany shortly. Venter had received her entire vocal training from Nellie du Toit. Venter was to share the role of Violetta with Rita Roberts, a contemporary of Du Toit, who usually sang for PACT opera performances in rural areas (Goosen 1978b).

<sup>31</sup> “Vrae wat kwel, omhul sangloopbaan van gevierde S.A. sopraan”.

She reported Du Toit's denial that she had vocal problems and her conviction that such insinuations – apart from their negative psychological impact – placed her singing career at a great disadvantage. Goosen mentioned that Du Toit was doubtful whether she would again find work in South Africa and that she feared that she would not easily survive the unpleasant turn of events (Goosen 1978a). In response to this issue, Du Toit performed in a recital in the Unisa auditorium on 27 July 1978 on special request of her followers in Pretoria (Unidentified author 1978).

## 7.9 THE YEAR 1979

The only opera in which Nellie Du Toit sang in 1979, was *La traviata*. Before the opening night Erika Nöthling (1979) had an interview with Du Toit, which was published under the heading “Nellie wants to sing opera for another 7 years”<sup>32</sup>.

Nöthling wrote that Du Toit was one of the stalwarts of South African singers who not only had an impressive list of achievements to her name, but had also made a name for herself as a singing teacher who helped some of South Africa's distinguished singers to fame. She asked Du Toit why she was hardly ever seen on TV and why there had been a silence. To this, Du Toit aptly replied that an artist couldn't be seen on television if he is not asked. Du Toit furthermore explained that the rumours that she was apparently past her prime were the opinion of one single critic. However, she said that in terms of singing she would still give her best for South Africa during the next six or seven years. Du Toit explained that she was still busy with concerts and recitals throughout the country and expressed her wish to sing in operas like Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, Verdi's *Aida* as well as Slavic operas, especially Janáček's *Kátya Kabanowá*. She would also like to sing the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* because she was fond of Richard Strauss.

### *La traviata* (Violetta) – NAPAC

The only opera that was scheduled for Du Toit in 1979 was, again, *La traviata*. The new NAPAC production by James Conrad opened in Durban on 13 July. The PACT Symphony Orchestra was under the baton of Franco Ferraris. Luigi Bianco sang Alfredo and Dawie Couzyn sang the role of Germont for an indisposed Kenneth Reynolds (Programme 1979b).

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<sup>32</sup> “Nellie wil nog 7 jaar opera sing”. Ironically, this wish was never fulfilled. Instead, Du Toit would take a break from opera that lasted seven years before she was to return to the opera stage. This will be discussed in Chapter 9.



According to James Conrad in *Napac News* (Unidentified author 1979a), the role of Violetta for this production was to have been sung by Elizabeth Vaughan. However, when she had to withdraw from the production because of indisposition, he thought that Nellie du Toit was the only singer who had the necessary acting ability and aplomb to carry off the Violetta in his new production, set in the 1920s. (See a photograph of Du Toit as Violetta in Appendix XII.)

The critic Thys Odendaal (1979) wrote that it must have been a consolation for Du Toit to sing the role of Violetta in NAPAC's production of *La traviata*, after her *La traviata* in Windhoek had been cancelled. He said that, since she had not been heard in opera in South Africa for over a year, her appearance in Durban was most welcome. One may ask whether it was a "consolation" or a baptism of fire for Du Toit in order to prove to the opera world that she was still a fine singer. In the light of these circumstances it was a difficult challenge to resume her poise.

The press was favourably inclined towards her performance. Henning Viljoen (1979) of *Die Vaderland* commented<sup>33</sup> that after a somewhat cautious first act it was especially in the second and last act that Du Toit impressed with acting and singing that would hardly find its equal on any of the international opera stages. She again showed her great power as singing actress. Although some high notes lacked lustre, Du Toit had complete mastery of the role. Her pianissimo singing in the last act was incredibly beautiful and moving.

Aart de Villiers (1979) in *Die Transvaler* found the "NAPAC piece first-rate"<sup>34</sup>. With regard to Du Toit's singing, he wrote that experts might find fault with a few high notes, but everyone would have to admit that her interpretation was one of the most sincere and touching that was ever seen in this role. There was passage upon passage of true and great beauty, especially in the Fourth Act.

## **7.10 NEDERBURG OPERA PRIZE**

### **The Cape Nederburg Opera Prize – 1973**

On 8 February 1973 Nellie du Toit became the first woman to be awarded the Nederburg Opera Prize. This prestigious award had been instituted by the Stellenbosch Boere Wynmakery (Stellenbosch Farmers Winemakers) in 1972<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>"La Traviata het 'n sterker hand nodig".

<sup>34</sup>"Naruk-stuk heel voortreflik".

<sup>35</sup> Angelo Gobbato was the first recipient of the award.

Du Toit received the award for her interpretation of the title role in CAPAB's presentation of *Madama Butterfly* in the Nico Malan, Cape Town, in May 1972. The other female contestants were Evelyn Dalberg, Sarita Stern and Aviva Pelham. According to an unidentified author (1973a) in *Die Transvaler* of 9 February 1973, the award consisted of a sculpture and a cash prize of R1000, which Du Toit said she would use for furthering her opera experience.

She was also one of the three finalists who were nominated for the first Nederburg Prize in the Orange Free State in 1973 (Unidentified author 1973b). Chris van den Berg and Hans van Heerden were the other two contestants. She did however not receive this award.

### **The Transvaal Nederburg Opera Prize – 1975**

In June 1975 Nellie du Toit for the first time won the Transvaal Nederburg Opera Prize. It was awarded for her outstanding performance as Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for PACT in March 1974. Leo Quayle and Lawrence Folley were previous recipients (Davies 1975).

Du Toit's reaction to the announcement was that it had been a total surprise to her. She was happy that it had been awarded for her Lucia, especially since she had thought that this was a role she would never sing. She said that it was a pure coloratura role, which she approached more dramatically, and she was satisfied with how it came across.

She said that she did not intend singing much longer than a few years in order to have more time for herself, her children and for reading. She also intended saving the award money of R1000 for her next overseas trip during which she intended to gain new ideas and to see new things (Viljoen 1975)<sup>36</sup>. Du Toit mentioned that she still would like to sing Puccini's opera *Manon Lescaut* by Puccini and Verdi's *La traviata*. Nellie du Toit's indication to retire from opera in a few years' time were expressed when she was only forty-five, an age which is normally regarded as the best time in a singer's life. Up to then she had been actively involved in opera singing since her studies in 1950. She could thus look back on twenty-five years in opera. It is understandable that she was yearning for some normality and rest after her ceaseless activities as a singer.

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<sup>36</sup> "Die prys was heeltemal onverwags maar ek is verheug omdat dit vir Lucia is, 'n rol wat ek nooit gedink het ek sou kon sing nie. Dit is 'n rol vir suiwer koloratuur; ek het dit meer dramaties aangepak en is tevrede met die manier waarop dit oorgekom het. Ek wil nie baie lank meer sing nie – ek is ook nie meer 'n *teenager* nie. Moontlik sal ek net nog 'n paar jaar aangaan en dan wil ek tyd aan myself en my kinders bestee en sommer baie lees."

## **The Nederburg Opera Prize for the Orange Free State – 1975**

*Die Transvaler* of 19 September 1975 announced that Nellie du Toit had been awarded another Nederburg Prize in 1975. She received the Prize for her portrayal of Tosca in the PACOFS production in the Orange Free State in March that year. The article described Du Toit as one of the most versatile singers in South Africa, with a repertoire comprising lyrical Mozart roles, coloratura roles such as Lucia and Norma and dramatic roles in the vein of Madeleine and Leonora (Unidentified author 1975c).

### **7.11 SUMMARY**

The early and **mid-seventies** saw Nellie du Toit at the **height of her vocal prowess**. It displayed her **varied vocal capacities** which now encompassed the range of dramatic coloratura roles. After her highly **successful portrayal** of the coloratura role of **Lucia**, Du Toit accepted the challenge of the coloratura role *par excellence*, the **Queen of the Night**, which however was **less successful**. Other new roles in this genre were **Donna Anna, Norma** and **Marguerite**. To her *lirico spinto* repertoire she added roles such as **Tosca, Jenůfa** as well as **Madeleine**, which took her voice to its dramatic limits. Much of Du Toit's success in the dramatic roles could be attributed to the excellent projection of her voice. In spite of dramatic singing she had retained brightness in her upper register as well as her soaring pianissimo which enabled her to portray **lyrical roles** such as **Micaëla** and **Liù**.

The **late-seventies** signalled the **end of her opera career** at the age of forty-nine. In the years between 1971 and 1979 Du Toit made her greatest contribution to the art of opera for the four Provincial Arts Councils. In these nine years she **sang in thirty seasons**, in comparison to the fifteen seasons sung in the seven years between 1963 and 1969. Of these thirty seasons, nine were sung for PACT, five for CAPAB, twelve for NAPAC and four for PACOFS.

Du Toit sang three seasons in 1972, four seasons in 1971, 1973 and 1976, her **busiest years** being **1974 and 1975 with five seasons in each year**. Due to ill health she cancelled a season of *Lucia di Lammermoor* for CAPAB in 1972, some performances of PACT's *Norma* in 1974 and all but one performance of PACOFS *Il trovatore* in Sasolburg in 1975. After signs of fatigue from overwork appeared in 1976, she scaled down her involvement in opera in the subsequent three years to two productions in 1977 and one production each in 1978 and 1979.

Apart from the decision being motivated by the **need for some vocal rest**, her **scaling down** in the late seventies was probably a partial result of one **adverse press review** which commented negatively on her portrayal of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* for PACT in **1978**. This led to rumours and assumptions that she had developed vocal problems. Two of her opera contracts in other provinces were subsequently cancelled as a result of this.

In the seventies Du Toit sang under the following **conductors**: Leo **Quayle** (in seven productions), Franco **Ferraris** (in six productions) as well as Bryan **Balkwill**, David **Tidboald** and John **Pryce-Jones** (in four productions each). The **producer** she worked with **most frequently** was James **Conrad**, under whose direction Du Toit sang in no fewer than twelve seasons, including re-stagings. Neels **Hansen** staged four and Gregorio **Fiasconaro** staged three productions, Frederick **Dalberg**, Leonard **Schach** and Angelo **Gobbato** being other South African producers Du Toit worked with. Du Toit also had the opportunity to work under the direction of three **internationally acclaimed producers**, including the Iranian producer Enayat **Rezai** and Ande **Anderson** from Covent Garden. The most exceptional was probably Dino **Yannopoulos** from the New York Metropolitan Opera who produced *Norma* for PACT<sup>37</sup>.

In the seventies Du Toit was awarded the **Nederburg Opera Prize** on **three occasions**: the first time in 1973 for her 1972-portrayal of the title role in *Madama Butterfly* for CAPAB. In **1975** she received the prize twice: for her **1974** interpretation of *Lucia di Lammermoor* for PACT, and for *Tosca* which she had sung for PACOFS in **1975**.

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<sup>37</sup> Compare Appendices V and VI.

## CHAPTER 8

### NELLIE DU TOIT: OTHER SINGING ACTIVITIES: 1970–1979

#### 8.1 SINGING IN JAPAN

In order to complete the picture of Nellie du Toit's singing activities in the course of her career as professional singer in South Africa, mention is also made of the only opportunity she had, besides the period in England, to prove her status beyond the borders of the Southern Africa. At the same time it throws a light on the political circumstances during the apartheid years, which had a negative influence on artists and musicians wanting to make a career abroad. Equity, the British labour union for artists, ruled that South African musicians who wanted to perform in Great Britain could only do so on condition that they would never again perform in their own country. This was the reason why Mimi Coertse, for example, had to stop singing in Covent Garden.

#### **“Second Worldwide Madame Butterfly Competition” – Japan**

In 1970 Nellie du Toit's sister, Marie Gaerdes, who at that time lived in Japan, coaxed her to enter the “Second International Madame Butterfly Competition” in Japan<sup>1</sup>, which took place from 25 May till 18 June 1970. There were twenty-seven contestants from countries behind the Iron Curtain, the Far East, Europe and America, among them Kiri te Kanawa.

The contest consisted of four rounds. After the first audition, twenty-four preliminary winners were admitted to the second, after the second round twelve contestants went through to the third round from which the best six singers were chosen. The participants were to sing five excerpts from the opera *Madama Butterfly* in original key and language. In the semi-final round the famous love duet, for which a tenor was provided, was among the two items that had to be sung.

The final round demanded the excerpt “Ancora un passo or via” as well as the two famous arias “Un bel dì vedremo” and “Piccolo Iddio! Amore mio”. The Organization Committee offered six prizes, as well as two diplomas. The first prize was to be one million yen in cash, the diploma prizes 50 000 yen in cash (Programme 1970c: 33, 35, 41, 76).

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<sup>1</sup> The first competition had been in 1967 (Programme 1970a).

Nellie du Toit recalls that the competition was very tough because for three weeks she had to sing in public almost every day. Luckily she had full moral support from her sister. The final round was televised on colour TV. Du Toit was seventh out of the eight best Butterflies chosen, which also earned her a cash prize apart from the live television broadcast (Du Toit 1998). The Japanese described her as the woman with love in her voice. One of the adjudicators, Robert Herman, Assistant Manager of the New York Metropolitan Opera, was very impressed with Du Toit's singing (Breytenbach 1970).

The winners were the Mexican soprano Gilda Cruz-Romo from the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Wilma Vernocchi from Italy. After her success in the Madame Butterfly competition, Du Toit was offered a role in *Faust* in Czechoslovakia. But, again for political reasons, she was unable to accept it (Du Toit 1998).

During the World Folk Music Festival on 2 June in the Kosei-Nenkin Festival Hall in Osaka, Du Toit, dressed in a traditional Voortrekker outfit, sang S. le Roux Marais' Afrikaans song "Heimwee". Under Apartheid white South Africans were often treated with hostility abroad and Du Toit could feel the animosity towards her as South African as she stepped on stage. "It felt like walking into an ice box" (Du Toit 1998).

After the "Butterfly" competition, Nellie du Toit travelled to the United States to visit her brother Piet in Butte, Montana. Breytenbach (1970) wrongly states that Du Toit sang two opera arias in the Merve Griffin show on television in California. Dr Du Toit (2002e) assumes that after the competition the TV recordings made in Japan might have been shown on TV in the United States.

## **8.2 RECITALS**

As in the sixties, Du Toit's recitals were never pure lieder recitals but contained items from the opera and operetta repertoire. She sometimes added popular light classical music items.

### **Solo Recitals**

In 1971 the Republic of South Africa celebrated its tenth anniversary. On 17 February Du Toit contributed to the festival celebrations with a recital in the Musaion, Pretoria, with the New Zealand pianist Russell Channell as accompanist.

The recital was presented by PACT in collaboration with the City Council of Pretoria and the Republic Festival Committee of the Transvaal.

The well-compiled programme (1971b) provided variety and some new items in Du Toit's repertoire: Two Baroque compositions, Handel's aria "Quel finger affetto" from *Ezio* and Purcell's "Music for a while" from *Oedipus* were followed by Bellini's aria "Casta diva" from *Norma*, and Dvořák's *Zigeunerlieder*. After interval a group of Russian songs by Glinka, Dargomishky, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov were sung, as well as a selection from Guridi's *Seis canciones castellanas*.

The press was unanimous about her excellent voice-production and control. For the critic J.S. (1971) her voice had a special quality lying between lyrical and dramatic, which allowed for a large scope of interpretation possibilities. The critic was most impressed with her piano singing and the bel canto singing in Purcell's "Music for a while".

Alethea Matthews (1971), who also noted a surprisingly good quality in Du Toit's lower register, thought that her voice had "great clarity and strength; mezza voce notes were beautifully placed and controlled and she uses subtle effects to enhance the character of the particular song with artistry".

On 16 October 1974 Hubert du Plessis accompanied Du Toit in a concert recital under the auspices of PACT in Pretoria. Du Toit gave the first performance of Hubert du Plessis' *Three Nocturnes* Op. 36, an Oude Libertas Commission. The songs are entitled "Repos ailleurs" on a poem by Totius, "Suidoos" set to a poem by Ernst van Heerden and finally "Winternag" to the words of Eugène Marais. The latter is a rendition with piano accompaniment of the original orchestrated version that appears in *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad*<sup>2</sup>.

Dr Hubert du Plessis (2002) commented that again he had the voice of Nellie du Toit in mind when he wrote these songs. He mentioned that they had fifteen rehearsals before the concert. "Suidoos" in particular has a very intricate accompaniment and the artists needed time to coordinate the vocal and the piano part.

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<sup>2</sup> Cecilia Wessels was the first to sing it in this version, written in 1967 and revised in 1974 to be incorporated into *Drie Nocturnes* (Du Plessis 2002).

In his view the underlying theme of the poem demanded such a musical setting. Dr Du Plessis recalls that even Hennie Joubert complained that the accompaniment was too difficult. With regard to the recording of these songs (which the author was able to listen to together with the composer), Dr Du Plessis thought that in “Repos ailleurs” Du Toit had an inclination to sound somewhat sharp due to the high *tessitura* of the song.

In the same programme with Du Plessis as accompanist, Du Toit furthermore sang lieder by Brahms (“Von ewiger Liebe”, “Der Tod das ist die kühle Nacht”, “Juché”) and Strauss (“Zueignung”, “Freundliche Vision”, “Allerseelen”, “Cäcilie”), as well as Japanese folk-songs (“Cradle Song”, “Forget-me-not”, “Over the hills”). The recital also included the opera arias “Non più di fiori” from Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*, “Bel raggio lusinghier” from Rossini’s *Semiramide* and the infrequently-heard “Oh nel fuggente nuvolo” from Verdi’s *Attila*. The above programme was performed for SWAPAC in Windhoek on 21 October and Gobabis on 23 October 1974, with Hennie Joubert as accompanist (Programme 1974d).

In 1976 and in 1978 Du Toit appeared in recitals in Paarl. Dalene Steenkamp was her accompanist at the Oude Pastorie Museum on 13 April 1976. The programme opened with four songs, by Purcell, Arne, Handel and Haydn respectively, followed by Mozart’s “Non più di fiori” from *La clemenza di Tito*. Three Bellini songs concluded the first half: “Vaga luna che inargenti”, “Vanne, o rosa fortunata”, “Per pietà, bell’ idol mio”. Three lieder by Brahms, “Die Mainacht”, “Schwesterlein” and “In stiller Nacht” were followed by three Japanese folksongs. The recital ended with two opera arias: “Bel raggio lusinghier” from Rossini’s *Semiramide* and, as a new addition, Verdi’s “Ritorna vincitor” from *Aida* (Programme 1976b).

Virtually the same programme as in Paarl, with the addition of two Tchaikovsky songs, was repeated in a recital for the Salisbury Arts Council on 8 September 1976 with Joubert as accompanist (Programme 1976f). There was a further performance at the Sanlam Auditorium of the Rand Afrikaans University according to *Beeld* of 15 September 1976 (Unidentified author 1976b).

Danie Louw accompanied Du Toit at Labori Herehuis on 13 November 1978. The programme included two Baroque arias: “Lascia ch’io pianga” and “Art thou troubled” by Handel, as well as five lieder by Schubert.



These were “Lachen und Weinen”, “Wiegenlied”, “Die Vögel”, “Mio ben ricordati” and “Bei dir”. Two songs by Tchaikovsky, “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt” and “So bald vergessen”, as well as Glinka’s “Zweifel” were sung in German. Four songs by French composers were Martini’s “Plaisir d’amour”, Massenet’s “Ouvre tes yeux bleus”, Hahn’s “Si mes vers avaient des ailes” and Gounod’s “Sérénade”. Fagan’s “Klein Sonneskyn” and “Die wonderboom” as well as Nepgen’s “Van Verlorelei” and “Salut d’amour” were chosen from the Afrikaans repertoire. The recital ended with “Ebben? ne andrò lontana” from Catalani’s *La Wally*, and Puccini’s “Vissi d’arte” from *Tosca* (Programme 1978d).

In September 1979 Du Toit probably gave her last concert in the Transvaal when she was heard in a recital at Unisa (Unidentified author 1979).

On 16 November 1979 Du Toit and Joubert gave a recital at the Bloemfontein Civic Theatre. The programme comprised : Handel’s “Care selve” and the two *arie antiche*, Marcello’s “Il mio bel foco” and Paisiello’s “Chi vuol la zingarella”, followed by five Brahms lieder: “Die Mainacht”, “Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht”, “Von ewiger Liebe”, “Schwesterlein” and “In stiller Nacht”. There were four French songs: Martini’s “Plaisir d’amour”, Hahn’s “Si mes vers avaient des ailes”, Massenet’s “Ouvre tes yeux bleus” and “Ouvre ton coeur” by Bizet. Three groups were presented after interval. The first consisted of three Afrikaans art songs: Gerrit Bon’s “Eenvoudige liedjie” as well as “Heimwee” and “Rooidag” by S. le Roux Marais. Five folk-songs, three from Japan, a Swiss and a Norwegian folk-song made up the second group. The programme ended with three opera arias: “Ebben? ne andrò lontana” from Catalani’s *La Wally* as well as two arias by Puccini: “Che il bel sogno” from *La rondine* and “O mio babbino caro” from *Gianni Schicchi* (Programme 1979c).

### **Recitals with Gé Korsten**

In the 1970’s Du Toit still frequently appeared in joint recitals with Gé Korsten. Concerts of this kind were, for example, given during a concert tour of South West Africa/Namibia<sup>3</sup> in April 1970 (Programme 1970b). They also performed in March 1975 in Bloemfontein and in August 1976 for CAPAB.

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<sup>3</sup> The performances in Windhoek were on 18, 20 and 22 April in the hall of Windhoek High School.

The first time the author had heard Nellie du Toit was in April 1970 when Du Toit and Korsten undertook a concert tour of South West Africa, accompanied by Susan Steenkamp on the piano and the organ. The only (childhood) memory that remains with regard to their concert in Windhoek, is that of the two singers toasting each other on stage with a glass of sparkling wine - most likely in the “Brindisi” from *La traviata*.

For the South West African audiences Du Toit sang (i.a.) Handel’s “Care selve” and Schubert’s “Gretchen am Spinnrade”. Opera arias included Puccini’s “O mio babbino caro” from *Gianni Schicchi* and Verdi’s “Mercè, dilette amiche” from *I vespri siciliani*. Other items were “Eriskay Love Lilt” and Valverde’s “Clavelitos”, Dostal’s “Ich bin verliebt” and Novello’s “I can give you the starlight”. Operatic duets sung with Gé Korsten were “Notturmo” from Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale*, the “Brindisi” from Verdi’s *La traviata* and, in an even lighter mood, the “Waltz” from Lehár’s *Die lustige Witwe* and “Deep in my heart” from Romberg’s *The Student Prince* (Programme 1970b).

In spite of the demands of the title role in *Tosca* in Bloemfontein in 1975, Du Toit still found the time for a recital with Gé Korsten. It took place in the Bloemfontein City Hall on 9 March 1975 with Hennie Joubert as accompanist. Edward Aitchison (1975) commented that the recital as a whole was of “varying standard”. In his opinion the art of Gé Korsten was not compatible with that of a recitalist. But Du Toit, he thought, was in excellent voice and the ensemble singing in the duet from *Aida* most impressive in spite of some insecurities. Aitchison continues: “Her approach was always intelligent and musical, with a wonderful grasp of the various vocal styles be it that of Handel, Schumann, Bellini or Puccini. This was coupled with truly glorious vocalisation.”

In August 1976 CAPAB Music presented an evening with Du Toit and Korsten, accompanied by Hennie Joubert. The programme does not state place or venue. Du Toit’s contribution to the evening consisted of a widely varied selection. The first group comprised Handel’s “Care selve”, Arne’s “Where the bee sucks” and Tchaikovsky’s “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt”. The second group featured two arias: “O mio babbino caro” from Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* and “Ritorna vincitor” from Verdi’s *Aida*. “Heimwee” by S. le Roux Marais, the aria “Liebe, du Himmel auf Erden” from the operetta *Paganini* by Lehár, and the ever-popular Spanish song “Clavelitos” by Valverde were contained in the third group.

The items sung with Korsten included three duets by Verdi, “O terra addio” from *Aida* and “Un di felice” and “Parigi, o cara,” from *La traviata*. The evening ended on a light note with “Niemand liebt dich so wie ich” from Lehár’s *Paganini*, the “Love Song” from *Lilac Time*, based on the music by Schubert, and “Deep in my heart” from Romberg’s *The Student Prince* (Programme 1976e).

### **Recitals with other co-artists**

Since the creation of the Nellie du Toit Bursary in the late sixties, Du Toit regularly performed in aid of this bursary. “Singer has stature” was the comment of Jaap Metz in the *Pretoria News* of 19 June 1973 after her bursary concert in the new Auditorium of UNISA on 18 June 1973.

The programme, which also featured clarinetist Ferdinand Fischli, included two Bach arias and Schubert’s “Der Hirt auf dem Felsen”, folk-songs from Italy, France and Japan, Heinrich Proch’s “Theme and Variations for Coloratura Soprano”, and three opera arias: from Charpentier’s *Louise*, Verdi’s *Attila* and Bellini’s *I puritani* (Programme 1973e).

Metz thought that she had chosen a balanced and entertaining programme. Aided admirably by the immaculate accompaniment of Hennie Joubert, who showed outstanding sensitivity, they proved to be a team of “undisputed stature”. Metz added that Du Toit “was particularly good in the middle register, creating colourful and evocative effects...” [and that] “Nellie du Toit is one of our foremost artists. Her voice is warm and has acquired a mellow expressiveness”.

After this date, no further programmes regarding a bursary concert could be traced. After several telephonic conversations with Prof. Hubert van der Spuy (2002a,b) and the head of Examinations of UNISA, Mr John Roos (2002a,b), Roos established that the bursary fund had been dormant for almost thirty years. No bursary had been allocated up to this date, since there were not enough funds available. It was established that at present the fund amounted to R35 000,00. Mr Roos said that the bursary would hopefully be reactivated in 2003. He added that it can be seen that Du Toit's hard work of the past even stretches into the twenty-first century (Roos 2002c).

Among the recitals Du Toit shared with other soloists was a joint recital with her pupil Rikie Venter on 30 November 1973. Marietjie Joubert was the accompanist (Programme 1973h).

Du Toit's solo contributions were two Handel arias "Care selve" from *Atalanta* and "Ye dear eyes so tender" from *Giulio Cesare*, as well as a group of six songs: "Plaisir d'amour" (Martini), "Go not happy day" (Bridge), "Aprile" (Tosti), "Rooidag" (S. le Roux Marais), "Eriskay Love Lilt" and "Clavelitos" (Valverde). She ended with three arias: "Porgi amor" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, "Oh! Quante volte" from Bellini's *I Capuletti e i Montecchi* as well as Violetta's aria from Verdi's *La traviata*, "Ah! fors' è lui". Du Toit and Venter sang three duets: one by Purcell and two by Brahms.

On 13 May 1979 Du Toit and Hennie Joubert performed in a Gala concert by the Music Society of the Brakpan Cultural Association featuring several artists. Du Toit's programme included items in a lighter vein. The five Afrikaans art songs were Bon's "'n Eenvoudige liedjie", Willemstijn's "Wiegeliedjie" and three songs by S. Le Roux Marais: "Heimwee", "Rooidag" and "Lied van die wonderboom". Further items were Martini's ever-popular "Plaisir d'amour", Hahn's "Si mes vers avaient des ailes", Tosti's "La serenata", and in a Viennese mood "Wien, Wien nur du allein" by Strauss and Lehár's "Liebe, du Himmel auf Erden" (Programme 1979a).

### **Conclusions with regard to recital repertoire**

As it was impossible to find the programmes of every single concert and recital in which Du Toit took part, it is not possible to establish beyond any doubt which were the most frequently sung works. Appendix III lists the composers from whose works Du Toit chose most of her repertoire. This will enable the reader to get an approximate idea of the range of her lied repertoire, since it was not the aim of this project to identify the minutest details of her concert repertoire.

However, from the considerable percentage of recital programmes that could be found, evidence is clear that Du Toit's recitals always provided a wide spectrum of variety. They showed diversity of genre, style and language. As far as could be established from available programmes, her recital repertoire in the seventies comprised compositions from the Baroque to the twentieth century, although no atonal or *avant garde* contemporary music seems to have been sung in public.

Du Toit often opened a recital with Baroque items, such as Handel arias, for example "Quel finger affetto" from *Ezio* or Purcell's "Music for a while" from *Oedipus*. She also included *arie antiche*.

From the German lied repertoire, she favoured Brahms, Strauss, and Schubert. From the Russian repertoire, Du Toit chose a few songs by Glinka, Dargomishky, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, which were sung in German or English. Dvořák's *Zigeunerlieder* were sung in German. Compositions by Bon, Du Plessis, Fagan, S. le Roux Marais and Rosa Nepgen represented the Afrikaans art song. Du Toit occasionally included a few French art songs by Massenet, Hahn, Gounod and Bizet as well as a group of Italian songs by Bellini. Songs by Guridi, as well as Valverde's sprightly song "Clavelitos", an absolute favourite, represented the Spanish repertoire.

Folk-songs, cherished for their simplicity, were a welcome addition to programmes. A group of three Japanese folk-songs and the "Eriskay Love Lilt" from the Hebrides featured frequently. Once-off rarities were the "Theme and Variations for Coloratura Soprano" by Proch and Schubert's "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen".

Since Du Toit regarded herself first and foremost as an opera singer, virtually all her recitals contained at least two opera arias, which for once she could sing in their original language. Du Toit once presented a recital with Schubert lieder in the middle of a busy opera season, something that she said she would never take on again, since it is difficult to switch the voice from opera to lieder singing (Du Toit 2001a).

Regarding her operatic repertoire included in recitals, it becomes evident that Du Toit had a predilection for Italian opera arias. As far as can be assessed, in the seventies her programmes contained no German opera arias, but only some arias from the German operetta repertoire. The only aria that could be traced from the French repertoire was "Depuis le jour" from Charpentier's *Louise*.

Du Toit's choice of Bellini arias included the famous "Casta diva" from *Norma*, "Qui la voce" from *I puritani* and "Oh quante volte" from *I Capuletti e i Montecchi*. "Vissi d'arte" from *Tosca* and "Oh mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi* were possibly her most beloved Puccini arias. From the Verdi repertoire she frequently sang the aria "Mercè, dilette amiche" from *I vespri siciliani*. "Ah! fors' è lui" from *La traviata*, and "Ritorna vincitor" from *Aida* featured occasionally, as well as the infrequently-heard aria "Oh nel fuggente nuvolo" and "Santo di patria" from *Attila*.

Rossini's coloratura-rich aria "Bel raggio lusinghier" from *Semiramide* and the lesser-known Mozart aria "Non più di fiori" from *La clemenza di Tito* also featured a number of times. "Porgi amor" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* was included once. "Ebben? ne andrò lontana" from Catalani's *La Wally* was only included in programmes in the late seventies when Du Toit's voice became more dramatic.

Du Toit's duet repertoire sung in recitals with piano accompaniment included items from the operas, operettas and musicals. The most popular items were from Verdi's *La traviata*: the "Brindisi", "Un dì felice" and "Parigi, o cara". Other operatic duets were "O terra, addio" from Verdi's *Aida* and "Notturmo" from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*.

From Lehár's operetta *Paganini* she sang "Niemand liebt dich so wie ich" and the "Waltz" from *Die lustige Witwe*. "Deep in my heart" was from Romberg's *The Student Prince* and the "Love Song" from *Lilac Time*, based on the music by Schubert. Du Toit's duet repertoire also featured duets by Brahms and Purcell.

### 8.3 ENSEMBLE RECITALS

On two occasions Du Toit performed with the Overvaal Ensemble under the direction of its founder, Pieter de Villiers. According to Prof. Pieter de Villiers (2002), Du Toit in the 1970's replaced Joyce Barker, who originally was a member of the quartet. The baritone Lawrence Folley replaced Rudi Neitz. The other members were Sarie Lamprecht (alto) and Gert Potgieter (tenor). This ensemble did not perform often: it was difficult to get its professional members coordinated, since they all had busy concert careers.

The Overvaal Ensemble concerts in which Du Toit sang, took place in 1970 (Programme 1970h) and 1971, when the quartet performed in Cape Town in May/June according to an unidentified author (1971a) of *Die Transvaler*. Prof. De Villiers recalls that the concerts in 1970, presented by PACOFS, were sung in Bloemfontein and Welkom. The quartet's repertoire included canons, Elizabethan madrigals, Brahms' *Liebeslieder-Walzer* and a mixed modern group comprising works from composers like Hindemith, Bartók and Pieter de Villiers. Quartets from the Flotow opera *Martha* and Verdi's *Rigoletto* were also performed. Peggy Haddon and Pieter de Villiers were the accompanists (Programme 1970h).

In 1971 there were two performances in Cape Town. The first one, in the Hofmeyr Theatre, was part of the festival celebrations commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Republic of South Africa. On this occasion, each of the soloists also sang a short song cycle by a South African composer. Nellie du Toit sang a composition by Hennie Coetzee from *Potchefstroom* on the text of the Afrikaans poet, Totius. The second concert was held in Muizenberg (De Villiers 2002).

Prof. De Villiers (2002) recalls Du Toit's professionalism. She was always well prepared – for performances as well as rehearsals.

## 8.4 SOLOIST WITH ORCHESTRA

### **Arias, duets and ensembles**

In concerts with orchestral accompaniment, Du Toit often made use of the opportunity to sing arias from operas that she never had the opportunity to perform. She also sang arias from operas that she would not have sung because they did not suit her such as *Rigoletto*, the role of Gilda being too light-weight.

In a concert entitled “Gems from the Operas”, Du Toit was the soloist with the Durban Symphony Orchestra conducted by Heinz Finger on 2 July 1970. She performed four arias from the Italian opera repertoire: “Bel raggio lusinghier” from Rossini's *Semiramide*, “Regnava nel silenzio” from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Verdi's “Caro nome” from *Rigoletto* and Bellini's “Qui la voce” from *I puritani*. The critic N.C. (1970) was enthralled with Du Toit's “wonderfully rich soprano voice” and her “effortlessly expressive singing [which] was radiant, deepening to a brilliant lustre in coloratura”.

On 11 and 12 February 1971 Du Toit was the soloist with PACT Orchestra under Leo Quayle in their Tchaikovsky season in Benoni and Pretoria. She sang Mozart's concert aria “Ah, non sai” K. 416, and Ophelia's “Mad Scene” from *Hamlet* by Thomas (Programme 1971a).

According to an unidentified author (1971b) in *Die Vaderland* of 12 April 1971, Du Toit sang two concerts with the SABC Orchestra in Bloemfontein and Klerksdorp after *La traviata* in April 1971. No appropriate programmes could be found for this occasion.

In orchestral concerts Du Toit was sometimes partnered by other singers. Such was the case on 6 March 1970 when she sang opera duets with the baritone Bob Borowsky and the SABC Symphony Orchestra under Edgar Cree (Programme 1970a). These were “Il pallor funesto” from Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* and “Tutte le feste” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.

Du Toit and Gé Korsten were the soloists in a popular concert by the National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC under Edgar Cree. It took place on 6 August 1971 in the City Hall, Pretoria (Programme 1971f). Du Toit sang the aria “Regnava nel silenzio” from Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the duet “Sulla tomba che rinsera” from the same opera. The aria “Ich bin verliebt” from Dostal’s operetta *Clivia* and the duet “Schenkt man sich Rosen in Tirol” from Zeller’s *Der Vogelhändler* were Du Toit’s contribution to the “popular” aspect of the concert.

Du Toit and Korsten, accompanied by the PACT Orchestra directed by John Pryce-Jones, also sang at a concert held in the Meyerspark Gardens on 15 and 16 February 1972 (Programme 1972b). Du Toit’s solo contributions were “In quelle trine morbide” from Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*, “Ernani, Ernani involami” from Verdi’s *Ernani* as well as the “Waltz” from Gounod’s *Romeo et Juliette*. Duets with Korsten included “Tornami a dir” from *Don Pasquale* and “Sulla tomba che rinsersa” from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, both by Donizetti.

Du Toit also featured in CAPAB’s *Midnight Matinée*, to celebrate the New Year of 1973 (Programme 1973a). No details were available in that programme.

From the biographies in an undated programme, it can be deduced that, presumable in 1974, Nellie du Toit, Sarita Stern, Gé Korsten and Lawrence Folley were the soloists with the Durban Symphony Orchestra under Werner Andreas Albert. They sang various arias and ensembles from the opera repertoire. Du Toit featured in the duet “Mira, o Norma” from Bellini’s *Norma*, “O terra, addio” from Verdi’s *Aida*, the trio “Anges purs, anges radieux” from Gounod’s *Faust*, as well as the aria “Ernani, Ernani involami” from Verdi’s *Ernani*. The quartet sang the well-beloved “Bella figlia dell’amore” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.

On 18 September 1977 Du Toit was the soloist with Gé Korsten in a Celebrity Concert in Durban. Edgar Cree was the conductor of a specially assembled orchestra.



“The Willow Song” and “Ave Maria” from Verdi’s *Otello*, and the “Czardas” from Strauss’ operetta *Die Fledermaus* were Du Toit’s solo items. Duets with Korsten comprised the “Brindisi” from Verdi’s *La traviata* and “O soave fanciulla” from *La bohème* (Programme 1977b).

### **Opera in concert version**

#### **Handel – *Giulio Cesare (Julius Caesar)***

On 6 November 1973 the National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC conducted by Jussi Jalas performed excerpts from Handel’s *Giulio Cesare* in concert version, with Nellie du Toit as Cleopatra and the bass Bruce Martin as Caesar (Programme 1973g).

Joe Sack (1973) thought the concert had “breadth and nobility” brought about by the superb sweeps of Handel’s melodic writing which gave the singers ample scope for vocal expression. He praised Du Toit’s musicianship and reported how her singing was imbued with understanding of the role she portrayed.

*As Cleopatra, Nellie du Toit sang her soprano arias with splendid control and even better musicianship, bringing a fine flow of cantabile to some passages and admirable flexibility to others requiring just that quality to make their semiquaver sequences accurate as well as ornamental. And some of the imperious character of the role shone through the singing, a tribute to her understanding as well as her projection.*

Angus Rose (1973) also thought that these excerpts were “superbly sung” and that Du Toit was “agile, audible and pure, and showed a lovely, lilting lift”. Ulmont Schneider (1973) commented on Du Toit’s clear, brilliant tone. He thought her interpretation appropriate and that it conveyed much of the drama of a stage production. He found her “Fuggi, Cesare, fuggi!” most impressive.

### **Soloist in choral-orchestral work**

#### **Beethoven – *Symphony No. 9 in d minor***

About two weeks after her NAPAC opera season in May 1975, Du Toit returned to the concert platform. This time she was the soprano soloist in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony given by the PACT Orchestra under Leo Quayle in commemoration of PACT Orchestra’s tenth birthday. There were two performances in Pretoria City Hall on 6 and 7 June and one in the Johannesburg Colosseum on 8 June 1975 (Programme 1975c).

The other soloists were Gé Korsten (tenor), Stella Beder (contralto) and Rudi Neitz (bass). According to Annie Tack (1975) of *Beeld*, the soloists displayed no feeling for ensemble singing. She remarked that the bad acoustics of the Colosseum were a hindrance to the performance. The soloists sounded as though they were competing to see who could sing the loudest. Gé Korsten would have received the first prize – in Tack’s opinion.

## **8.5 LIGHT MUSIC**

### **LP Records: *Die Laaste Somerros* and *The Student Prince***

In 1970 (presumably) another solo record by Nellie du Toit was released: *Die Laaste Somerros* (BRS 281). (See Appendix VIII.) On the record cover, Gé Korsten gives tribute to Du Toit’s artistry. He describes her as one of South Africa’s greatest and most versatile singers – someone of international standard. He classifies her as an opera singer *par excellence* but also as a memorable oratorio and lieder singer. Korsten testifies that her excellent technique and intelligent musicality contribute to make her one of South Africa’s most sought-after singing teachers. Her dedication and honest professional attitude towards her art was always an inspiration to him. This record shows Du Toit in a lighter vein, singing ballades and folk music in Afrikaans - her mother tongue. Her husband Philip Crouse did most of the translations. Korsten finds her voice always clear and well suited to the various items and her interpretation warm and genuine like her intrinsic personality.

Du Toit and Korsten also released a LP record, *The Student Prince* (BRS 252), with the Newkirk Orchestra. (See Appendix VIII.) The music was arranged and conducted by Hennie Bekker and George Hayden. No dates are given on the record.

### **Light music with Gé Korsten**

On 21 November 1970 Du Toit and Korsten presented a programme of light music, under the auspices of the ATKV of Kempton Park (Programme 1970f). It featured items like “Chiribiribin”, “Sweethearts”, “I could have danced all night”, “Moonlight and roses”, the duets “Schenkt man sich Rosen in Tirol” from Zeller’s *Der Vogelhändler* and “Parigi, o cara” from Verdi’s *La traviata*. A “Light Concert” by Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten was presented in Sasolburg on 28 August 1971 (Programme 1971g). The programme does not state the items sung.

### **Musicals: *The Desert Song* and *The Student Prince***

In the seventies, Du Toit twice portrayed the role of Margot Bonvalet in *The Desert Song* by Sigmund Romberg. The first time the musical was presented by the Port Elizabeth Gilbert and Sullivan Society and Theatre Guild in September 1970, produced by Heather Mann and conducted by Norbert Nowotny (Programmes 1970d and 1970e). Gé Korsten sang the part of The Red Shadow. In June/July 1978 Du Toit and Korsten once more sang in *The Desert Song*, this time in Rhodesia, in Salisbury and Bulawayo. The producer was Geoffrey Atkins and the musical director Sheila Bellew (Programme 1978b).

Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince* was the first musical which Du Toit sang in Rhodesia. It opened in the Repts Theatre, Salisbury on 19 January 1973. Perhaps it was not such a lucky choice for Du Toit, who seemed to be more at home in the opera repertoire. The critics acknowledged her powerful voice but thought that she was not so well suited to the character she portrayed. Charles Stoneman (1973) of *The Rhodesia Herald* writes about Du Toit's "soaring soprano voice" and her portrayal of a "somewhat stolid Kathy". Chris Reynolds (1973) thought of her as "a strong operatic voice totally unsuited to trivia of this nature". For him Du Toit looked "totally out of place as a young hotel waitress".

It seems as if vocally the role was not at all difficult but that it perhaps was of a too superficial nature for Du Toit, whose personality was suited to character roles of a more substantial nature.

## **8.6 ORATORIO AND RELATED GENRES**

Although endowed with the musical intelligence and depth required from superior oratorio singers, it appears that Du Toit's participation in oratorio diminished during the seventies. This was undoubtedly the result of her increasingly heavy schedule as an opera singer.

She sang Handel's *Messiah* with the Durban Symphony Orchestra under Charles Denholm in Durban on 3 and 6 December 1970 (Programme 1970g). A performance of Handel's *Messiah* in Afrikaans, with the Jubilate Choir and the PACT Symphony Orchestra under Derek Ochse was given on 18 November 1972 in Rustenburg with Du Toit as soloist. The other soloists were Nohline Mitchell (alto), Gé Korsten (tenor) and John Thorpe (bass). The relevant programme does not state the year, but according to Prof. Derek Ochse (2002) the performance was in 1972.

Two oratorio related works which Du Toit performed in the seventies, had international colouring: In 1970 she sang the soprano solo in the world première of Henk Badings' *Kantate VII, Ballade van die Bloeddorstige Jagter* (Malan 1980c: 446). This work received the Italia Prize in 1971 (Wouters 1980: 12).

Du Toit also had the opportunity to sing under the world-famous American conductor Lorin Maazel<sup>4</sup> (Programme 1971e) in Mozart's motet *Exsultate jubilate* in the Johannesburg City Hall on 23 July 1971.

## 8.7 SABC RECORDINGS AND BROADCASTS

Du Toit's regular involvement in opera for the Provincial Arts Councils seemed to have left her with little time for SABC recordings and broadcasts. But according to an article in *Die Vaderland* of 12 April 1971 (Unidentified author 1971b) she still made recordings in that year. On 13 September 1978 she and Hennie Joubert presented a studio concert in Studio 6 in the Television Centre of the SABC. She sang a group of Schubert lieder and four French art songs (Programme 1978c).

## 8.8 SUMMARY

Apart from her career as opera singer, the seventies also brought Nellie du Toit a **wide spectrum of concert opportunities**. The most significant event must have been her participation in 1970 in the Second Worldwide **Madame Butterfly Competition** in Japan where she reached the seventh place.

According to the programme sources that could be found for this research Du Toit sang **ten solo recitals** in the seventies. In 1970 Du Toit toured South West Africa/Namibia with Gé Korsten in joint recitals and shared two more recitals with him in 1975 in Bloemfontein and 1976 for CAPAB. On three occasions, she shared recitals with other co-artists, either singers or instrumentalists. With regard to recitals Du Toit worked mostly with her customary **accompanist, Hennie Joubert**, but also with a number of **new accompanists**: Russell Channel, Hubert du Plessis, Dalene Steenkamp, Susan Steenkamp and Danie Louw.

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<sup>4</sup> At that stage Maazel was Artistic Director of the Deutsche Oper in Berlin (Warrack and West 1994: 66, 427).

Her **recital repertoire** comprised **lieder and art songs** by Brahms, Schubert, Strauss, Dvořák, Bellini and Tchaikovsky. She also sang Afrikaans art songs, including the first performance of Hubert du Plessis' *Drie Nokturnes* Op. 36. **Opera arias** that featured in her recital repertoire were often from operas which she never had the opportunity to portray in stage productions. These included arias from Bellini's *Norma*, *I puritani* and *I Capuletti e i Montecchi*, Puccini's *Tosca* and *Gianni Schicchi*, Verdi's *I vespri siciliani*, *Aida* and *Attila* as well as Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and Catalani's *La Wally*. An aria from Charpentier's *Louise* represented the French repertoire. No arias from the German opera repertoire could be traced, probably because Du Toit had an affinity for the Italian repertoire, which she found more suited to her voice.

**Duet repertoire** was chosen mostly from **Italian operas**. Topping the list of duets sung in recitals were three from Verdi's *La traviata*. Other duets sung were from Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, from Lehár's operettas *Paganini* and *Die lustige Witwe* as well as from Romberg's musical *The Student Prince* and *Lilac Time* based on music by Schubert.

In 1970 and 1971 Du Toit joined the **Overyaal Ensemble** under Prof. Pieter de Villiers. The ensemble repertoire included Elizabethan madrigals, Brahms' *Liebeslieder-Walzer* and compositions by Bartók, Hindemith and De Villiers.

On **twelve occasions** Du Toit appeared as **soloist with orchestra** singing arias only or arias and duets. In **eight concerts**, she teamed up **with another singer**, once with the baritone Bob Borowsky, once in quartet formation with Lawrence Folley, Sarita Stern and Gé Korsten. All other concerts were sung with the tenor Gé Korsten. Her **aria repertoire**, mostly from **Italian operas**, included arias from Bellini's *I puritani*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, Rossini's *Semiramide* and Verdi's *Ernani*, *Otello* and *Rigoletto*. Two arias were presented from the **French repertoire**: from Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette* and from *Hamlet* by Thomas. Only two arias, by Dostal and Strauss, were chosen from the **operetta repertoire**. Large scale works with orchestra in which she participated, included a **concert version** of Handel's opera *Giulio Cesare* and **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony**.

Du Toit sang under **conductors** such as Werner Andreas **Albert**, Edgar **Cree**, Charles **Denholm**, Heinz **Finger**, Jussi **Jalas**, Loren **Maazel**, Derek **Ochse**, John **Pryce-Jones** and Leo **Quayle**.

In 1970 Du Toit once more sang the **world première** of a work by Henk **Badings**: his *Kantate VII, Ballade van die Bloeddorstige Jagter*. Her **oratorio** activities were limited to Handel's *Messiah* in 1970 and 1972.

Du Toit's contribution to the **light music** field again was in conjunction **with Gé Korsten**. Joint recitals with Korsten, however, seemed to be limited to 1970 and 1971 after which she seemed to be more involved in opera. She added two more LP **records** to her list of sound documentations: a solo record entitled *Die Laaste Somerroos* and a record with excerpts from *The Student Prince* with Gé Korsten as singing partner. She also participated in a stage production of this musical (in Rhodesia) in 1973 and in two productions of the **musical** *The Desert Song* in 1970 and 1978 respectively.

With her demanding opera schedule there seemed to be little time available for **SABC recordings**. However, the **operas** *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Jenůfa* were **broadcast** in 1973 and 1976 respectively.

## CHAPTER 9

### CAREER: 1980–2002

#### 9.1 PEDAGOGIC ACTIVITIES

With more than twenty years' experience of voice teaching to her credit as well as a number of students who had made successful careers, Nellie du Toit was well equipped to turn to a full-time and permanent lecturing and teaching post at University level. For thirteen years she would pursue an academic career before continuing as singing teacher in her private studio up to the present. In this time span many of her ex-students made singing careers in South Africa and abroad. And some already established singers found in Du Toit a vocal adviser who carefully guided them in their careers – a “luxury” which Du Toit herself had never experienced in her own singing career.

#### **Lecturing at the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town**

In January 1980, when Du Toit had just turned fifty, she followed Prof. George van der Spuy as head of the singing section at the Department of Music<sup>1</sup>, University of Stellenbosch. This author was among her first “intake” of new pupils. In her capacity as senior lecturer in singing, Du Toit also lectured in voice literature and didactics. Through her influence the University's music library expanded its literature on opera and vocal training by means of acquiring magazines such as *Opera*, *Opera News*, *Journal of Voice* and the *Nats Bulletin*, which Du Toit had subscribed to herself, in order to be informed of international developments in this field.

When asked in 2002 how she became involved in teaching, Dr Du Toit explained that she had always been intrigued by the technical (and musical) side of singing. She had initially started giving private vocal lessons because singers had asked her for therapeutic vocal assistance and help. In her approach to teaching she just did what she felt was vocally right. It seems as though she followed a singer's instinct in tandem with an inborn pedagogical talent. Being a good pianist, she could also accompany her pupils and students (Du Toit 2002e).

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<sup>1</sup> Colloquially known as the “Conserve”.

In an SABC interview with André Blom, Du Toit (1983) admitted that she had to make quite a professional adjustment when coming to Stellenbosch, because she had in the previous years taught and helped mainly professional singers. But she also pointed out that she enjoyed working with young people.

Asked what she, as a lecturer, expected of a student, she answered that she would prefer a student with ninety percent capacity for work and ten percent vocal talent, stating also that a voice alone was not enough. She also believed that one would get nowhere without a real love for singing. Furthermore, she thought that Stellenbosch had the best conservatoire in the Southern hemisphere.

At the end of 1986 Du Toit left the Stellenbosch Music Department to become a lecturer in singing at her alma mater, the College of Music at the University of Cape Town, as from January 1987. The motivation for leaving Stellenbosch University was that in 1986 Du Toit believed that the Opera School of the University of Cape Town offered more performance opportunities for students with operatic aspirations (Retief 1987). Unfortunately no such facility existed at Stellenbosch University, where no such Opera School exists. The second reason for quitting her senior lecturer post in exchange for that of a lecturer at UCT, was that Prof. Angelo Gobbato and Marita Knobel had asked her to join the staff. Furthermore, Gobbato eventually wanted to employ her at the CAPAB Opera Studio (Du Toit 2002e).

For three years Du Toit lectured in voice and voice literature at the UCT College of Music. She compiled her own vocal ensembles and worked with some students who were involved with the Opera School.

As the daily commuting from Stellenbosch to and from Cape Town became too tedious for Du Toit and the post at the CAPAB Opera studio never materialised, she returned to her former post as head of the singing section at the Stellenbosch Department of Music in 1990. This time she replaced Gerda Hartman who had taken up Du Toit's post when she left for UCT. At the end of 1993, at the age of sixty-four, Nellie du Toit retired from her full-time post at the University of Stellenbosch.



To mark the end of eleven years of close contact with the University of Stellenbosch, Du Toit presented the first act of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with her students in August 1993. The standard of the performance was judged as being "of a generally high average, stunning at its best and promising at its very worst" (Cloete 1993). From this performance, it became clear that Du Toit not only taught singing, "but also trained her students in a complete awareness of the demands of the stage and of public performing" (Cloete 1993).

### **Private teaching**

Du Toit said that she quitted the University post because the responsibility was getting too big for her and she wanted to have time for other things. Although no longer bound to an academic institution, Du Toit continued taking her pedagogic activities as seriously and dedicated as before. For years she already envisaged writing a book on methodology of singing and vocal literature, covering aspects such as suitable repertoire for the different stages of vocal development (Viljoen 1986c; Hudson 1993). In a radio programme by Eben Cruywagen she said she would like to phase out her private teaching activities slowly, and, after thirty-five years as a voice teacher, just work with professional singers (Du Toit 1994).

Dr Du Toit explained to Mariëtte Uys (1999) some aspects of her psychological approach to teaching. She gives high priority to the development of the student's own vocal individuality, as well as their unique interpretative abilities and capacities. The development of vocal technique/voice production is of utmost importance because a sound technique supports a singer even in the case of (temporary physical) vocal problems. Du Toit considers it a priority to make a student feel psychologically comfortable. She never insults a student and tries to exercise the utmost patience. Impatience would increase a student's stress level and be counter-productive in terms of vocal results and achievement. The only thing she can not accept is when a student does not "work". She herself is always willing to work hard but she views the teaching of singing as a "duet" between teacher and student. Only with such collaboration can one be creative. It gives her immense pleasure if a student succeeds with something on which they had worked together.

### **Pedagogic related activities**

In 1983 Du Toit visited various workshops and universities in America to do research in singing (Stassen 2001). These included Jacksonville (Florida), Ann Arbor (Michigan) Illinois and Wichita (Du Toit 2002e).

From 13-18 July 1987 Du Toit attended the First International Voice Teacher's Congress in Strasbourg, France, where this author met her and they together attended a lecture. In 1987 Du Toit delivered a paper at a course on voice production at the University of Potchefstroom, at which the main speaker was Prof. Hanno Blaschke from Munich (Unidentified author 1987).

In July 1992 Du Toit was on the organizing Committee of the First South African National Congress for Voice Teachers in Stellenbosch, where she served as chairperson and gave the keynote address. Her knowledge of the voice also led to an article in the 2000 edition of *Musicus* entitled "Finding the free voice" (Du Toit 2000: 135-138).

Not only had Du Toit often acted as external examiner for universities countrywide (Malan 2002) but she also served on the panel of adjudicators at the 1990 UNISA International Singing Competition in Pretoria, South Africa (Programme 1990: 19).

### **Students of note**

Most probably Du Toit's "star student" was to be the mezzo-soprano Michelle Breedt who, from 1981, had her entire training with Du Toit. Apart from singing opera in South Africa, she had a long engagement at the Braunschweig Theatre in Germany and now has a fixed position at the Vienna State Opera. She still works with Du Toit on regular visits to South Africa or, at times, in Europe.

In 2001 Breedt was chosen to sing the role of Magdalene in Wagner's opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* at the renowned Bayreuth Festival. Probably the greatest reward for Du Toit as a pedagogue was when Breedt not only sent her mentor a complementary ticket for the opera, but also an airflight ticket so that she could attend this memorable event (Malan 2002).

Virginia Davids can be considered another of Du Toit's very successful ex-pupils. She made a significant contribution to South African opera in the eighties and nineties. Davids started her vocal training with Du Toit in 1982 on a part-time basis. From 1984 to 1986 she worked full-time with Du Toit when she enrolled for a Performer's Licentiate in Music at the University of Stellenbosch. From 1986 till 1994 she was contracted to CAPAB whereupon she became a freelance singer. In 1996 she joined the teaching staff of the College of Music at UCT on a part-time basis. She was appointed Associate Professor in 2000.

Davids can be regarded as one of South Africa's foremost Verdian sopranos. She made her debut as Aida in 1988. Since then, she has sung leads in operas such as *Il trovatore*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Don Carlos*, *Nabucco* and portrayed Puccini roles such as *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. She has sung in all the main centres in South Africa, and sang the role of Tosca in Zimbabwe in the nineties. In 1990 she was awarded the prestigious Dalberg Bursary which enabled her to study with Christina Deutekom in the Netherlands and to work with several coaches in Europe.

Davids mentioned two attributes that make Nellie du Toit an exceptional voice teacher: her honesty and her finely tuned ear. She finds Du Toit's has a unique ability to "diagnose" and then to "remedy". In her view Du Toit has incredible insight into the human voice and a strong pedagogical gift. Du Toit also taught her not to have illusions, to work hard and to be grounded – guidelines which Davids also pass on to her own students. Davids also regards Du Toit as a role model, since she herself, as wife and mother of two, never envisaged a career overseas to the detriment of her family and also because she had enough opportunities in South Africa as an opera singer and a voice teacher (Davids 2002).

The lyric soprano Dianne Breetzke studied with Du Toit from 1986 to 1991, completing her Higher Performer's Licentiate at the University of Stellenbosch in 1986 as well as an Honours degree in Music at the College of Music UCT in 1987. Under Du Toit's guidance she also obtained the Royal School's Performer's Licentiate and the UNISA Performer's Licentiate in 1989 with distinction. Thereafter she continued with private lessons. In 1991 she was a recipient of the Mimi Coertse Overseas Bursary which allowed her to further her studies in Vienna that year. She also performed in a number of operas in South Africa (Breetzke 2002).

The coloratura soprano Hanlee Louw studied with Du Toit in Stellenbosch and at the College of Music in the eighties where she completed a Diploma in Opera. She appeared in a couple of operas in South Africa before leaving for Italy (Du Toit 2002e).

The author of this thesis studied with Du Toit for several years. She completed her B.A. in Music, with singing as major instrument in 1981 as well as a Higher Performer's Licentiate in Music in 1985. This was followed with an Honours degree in Music (Performers) in 1986.

In 1987 she furthered her studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg, Germany, where she studied among others with Prof. Xander Haagen. She was contracted to the Freiburg Municipal Theatre for three seasons, from 1992 to 1995. In that time she turned to Du Toit for vocal guidance and vocal coaching for the title role in Verdi's *La traviata*, which she performed eighteen times. She returned to South Africa explicitly to work with Du Toit, since she could not find a suitable teacher in Europe whom she could trust and work with when she developed into a *soprano lirico spinto*. When she enrolled for a Master's degree in Music (performers) at the University of Stellenbosch in 1999, Dr Du Toit was her vocal supervisor.

Andy Cloete who pursued his vocal studies with Du Toit parallel to his medical studies, has a fine lyrical tenor voice particularly suited to Baroque music and Mozart. He sang in oratorio and opera in South Africa, before practising in the medical profession in Great Britain. He now has a full time engagement at the Opernhaus Graz, Austria. The baritone George Stevens, who had made name for himself in several operas notably in Cape Town, was contracted to the Bremen State Theatre in 1997. The tenor André Fox, contracted to the opera choir of the Theater am Gärtnerplatz in Munich, Germany, now in Essen, also pursued nearly his entire training under the guidance of Nellie du Toit (Du Toit 2002e).

For several years Du Toit taught the soprano Heidemarie Lubbe, who is convinced that one would have to search far and wide to find a teacher of her calibre. Lubbe was a household name especially in oratorio in the Cape, while doing valuable work at the SABC and later as music producer for recordings. She now lives in Germany.

Henda Strydom, who won the Mable Quick bursary and completed an Honours degree in Music under Du Toit, now lives in the Netherlands where she is a full-time professional choral soprano in the Nederlands Omroepkoor (Netherlands Radio Choir). She also performs as soloist with the Radio Choir and is regularly one of the few selected sopranos from this renowned professional choir who sings chamber choir works under famous conductors like Ton Koopman and Philippe Herreweghe (Fick 2002a).

The soprano Mariëtte Janse van Rensburg, who under Du Toit's guidance sang the Strauss *Vier letzte Lieder* as participant of the Youth Concerto Festival under David Tidboald, now has a fixed position in the opera choir of the Staatstheater Cottbus, Germany.

She returns to Stellenbosch each year for lessons with Du Toit and confesses that up till the present she just could not find any vocal teacher of Du Toit's calibre in Germany (Janse van Rensburg 2002).

The mezzo-soprano Ann-Jeanette Benson, who has been a student of Du Toit since 1990, described her as an "incredible" teacher who concentrated on technique (Unidentified author 1991). After singing in the Johannesburg/Pretoria/Roodepoort triangle for a couple of years, she left for Great Britain.

Two professional singers, the mezzo-soprano Marilyn Bennet and soprano Andrea Catzel, worked with Du Toit on a regular basis in the course of their careers both in South Africa and abroad. Catzel believed that Nellie du Toit is one of the world's best vocal teachers (Schoeman 1994).

The renowned South African tenor Deon van der Walt<sup>2</sup>, who had worked with Nellie du Toit on previous occasions, brought her to Zurich, Switzerland, in January 1993 to work with her on his vocal technique (Du Toit 1994).

## **9.2 OPERA COME-BACK AND FAREWELL**

### ***Strauss – Der Rosenkavalier***

In Chapter 7 it was pointed out that Du Toit in 1978 sang the role of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* under psychologically adverse circumstances as her brother in America had died (Viljoen 1987)<sup>3</sup>. Since she was very close to him his death caused her immense grief. This influenced her voice. The one adverse press review that she then received, resulted in repercussions and insinuations that she had vocal problems. This affected her career considerably. Some of her opera contracts were cancelled and she sang her last role as Violetta in *La traviata*, in July 1979 in Durban (Programme 1979b), before taking up an academic career at the University of Stellenbosch.

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<sup>2</sup> A former student of the University of Stellenbosch and Prof. George van der Spuy. One of the rare few South African singers who "hit the grand slam" by performing in the renowned opera houses of the world: the Met, La Scala, the Vienna State Opera and Covent Garden.

<sup>3</sup> *De Kat* 1987 2: 10, "Nellie du Toit - Stem en weerklank – die sangeres wat aanhou gee". (Voice and echo – the singer who continues to give.)

Her total and full time dedication to teaching hardly left any time for performing; it seemed that she had bade opera a farewell. After an absence of seven years though, Nellie du Toit – at the age of almost fifty-six – made a successful comeback to the opera stage in the role of the Marschallin in the very first South African performance of Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Murray Dickie, CAPAB's Artistic Director since 1982 and tenor of international reputation, was the producer in this CAPAB production. Karl-Heinz Dold conducted the CAPAB Orchestra. Du Toit sang four performances: on 23, 27, 30 August and 6 September. Patricia Sadan sang the role on 3 and 10 September. Sally Present was heard as Octavian, Carina Cronjé sang Sophie and Karl Dumphart was Baron Ochs (Programme 1986a). (See Appendix XII for a photograph of Du Toit and Present.)

In spite of her academic involvement during the previous seven years, Du Toit proved that her voice was still in top form. Her astounding portrayal of the role was again proof of her stature as singer and she could eradicate the false impression held by some in the late seventies that she had irreversible vocal problems.

Prof. Henning Viljoen, a reputed opera connoisseur and opera critic of *Die Vaderland*, is the author of three well-researched articles on Nellie du Toit and her performance in *Der Rosenkavalier*. In an article entitled *Capab's Der Rosenkavalier in Scenaria* of October 1986 he wrote:

*After the absence of six years from the opera stage, Nellie du Toit's great artistry once again came to the fore in her masterful portrayal of the Marschallin. Words fail to do justice to this memorable performance, which musically and dramatically captured the heart and soul of the complete character.*

*One is struck by the psychological depth uncovered in the character and the meaning she instilled into the words. Her voice, which has become much darker, still projects with ease and technically she controls it brilliantly. It was a fitting and memorable farewell performance by this grand dame of South African opera (Viljoen 1986b).*

Louis Heyneman (1986) reported in *Die Burger* of 25 August 1986 that to him it had been a ravishing experience to see Nellie du Toit in the difficult role of the Marschallin. He praised her high register as well as her moving acting ability which is a fundamental prerequisite to this role. The mirror scene at the end of Act One, where the Marschallin realises that she is aging, was particularly touching. In his review entitled "Dickie scores a notable success" in the *Cape Times* of 25 August 1986, Deon Irish (1986) thought that:

*Du Toit made a moving Marschallin, sombre in “Kann mich auch an ein Mädel erinnern”, haunting in “Die Zeit”, poignant in the final trio. Her dignified presence evoked appropriate sympathy for a woman on the verge of losing her last link with youth – a youthful lover.*

Not only was the role of the Marschallin particularly difficult to interpret in view of the complex psychological characterization as well as its musical complexity, but also in terms of Du Toit’s personal psychological circumstances which she had to overcome in order to re-appear on the opera stage. According to Du Toit, it was a great challenge to gear herself psychologically for a public appearance in opera.

Fortunately, she had kept her voice technically in shape by means of teaching, but she had to work hard at the music, because she had not sung many operas in German<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the Strauss idiom was at first unfamiliar. It took her two months, in between her full-time teaching activities, to study the score of the Marschallin. This she wanted to know well before acceptance of the contract. It took another six months to make the role her own and really internalise the character (Viljoen 1987). The author of this thesis can recall that Du Toit several times went away for a weekend-retreat with the score of *Der Rosenkavalier* – accompanied by her ever-supportive husband, Philip.

Christine Crouse (2002), Du Toit’s eldest daughter, who was assistant producer in this production, recalls that the family members were very proud to see their mother make the comeback which brought her half out of retirement. This was made possible partly due to their encouragement and support.

*Der Rosenkavalier* was also the only opera in which this author saw Du Toit perform. She was fortunate to attend not only the dress rehearsal, but also every one of the four performances in which Du Toit sang at the Nico Malan Opera house. Du Toit’s portrayal of the role not only created a deep and lasting impression, but inspired the author to work towards an operatic career. She thought that Du Toit’s pronunciation of the German language was excellent in this difficult part which should be sung with a hint of a dialect.

After the final evening of *Der Rosenkavalier*, Nellie du Toit confirmed the rumours that this would be her last opera performance.

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<sup>4</sup> The role of Agathe in a concert version of *Der Freischütz* (compare Chapter 4) and the role of Octavian in a concert version of *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1964 (compare Chapter 6).

Asked why she decided to bid farewell to the opera stage after such a triumphant come-back which illustrated that she would still be able to give much, Du Toit mentioned in Viljoen (1987) that it was wonderful to bid farewell to opera on such a pinnacle. In a philosophical vein she added that it would be better if people ask why she retires from opera already, and remember her on her zenith, rather than question why she is still singing and, even worse, why she does not stop. Furthermore, she said that the role had come as a bonus, since once she started lecturing at the Music Department of the University of Stellenbosch she didn't think she would ever appear in opera again. She added that it is impossible to sing if one works full time (Du Toit 2002e). Already in 1971 and 1974 Du Toit had mentioned in the press that she did not wish to sing much longer, since, after more than two decades on stage, she yearned to spend more time with her family and have more time for her other interests in life (Keill 1974).

### 9.3 CONCERT COMMITMENTS

In the eighties Du Toit scaled down her singing activities but still made some significant contributions to her repertoire. These will be reviewed in chronological order.

#### 1980

A rewarding song cycle with orchestral accompaniment in any soprano's repertoire is *Vier letzte Lieder* by Richard Strauss, which Du Toit performed on 13 May 1980 at the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch with the CAPAB Orchestra under David Tidboald (Programme 1980a).

The eighties also mark Du Toit's collaboration with a former singing pupil of hers, then her colleague: Acáma Fick, the conductor of two Stellenbosch choirs. In 1980 Du Toit was the soloist with the Conservatoire Ladies Choir in Schubert's *Ständchen* Op. 135 as well as Hugo Wolf's *Elfenlied* from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Programme 1980b). Du Toit joined the choir in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth on the last lap of its Eastern Province tour in September.

The critic R.R.W. Nixon (1980) of the *Eastern Province Herald* reported that Nellie du Toit "was in splendid voice". Howard Nock (1980) of the Port Elizabeth *Evening Post* thought that Du Toit "obviously enjoyed working with the choir as much as the audience enjoyed her polished performance".



This concert programme was repeated in the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch on 8 October 1980 when Du Toit's contribution was again positively reviewed by Louis Heyneman of *Die Burger*. He thought that her voice blended well with the choral sound and created an interesting sound combination (Heyneman 1980).

## 1981

In the early eighties Du Toit again performed Afrikaans art songs, notably in works by Hubert du Plessis. She sang *Drie Nokturnes* Op. 36 in a recital on 15 March 1981 (Programme 1981a), accompanied by the composer who dedicated this work to her on that occasion. Du Toit had sung the very first performance of this composition in 1974 (See Chapter 8). She also recorded this group of songs in April 1981 for a broadcast on 17 October (Goosen 1981).

A further contribution by Du Toit to the Afrikaans art song of contemporary South African composers was *Drie Oosterse Liedere* by Paul Loeb van Zuilenburg. This was given at a concert entitled: "Vokale Musiek van Stellenbosse Komponiste" (Vocal music by Stellenbosch composers) on 11 October 1981 at the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch. Acáma Fick accompanied her (Programme 1981c). In this historically noteworthy recital, well-known Stellenbosch musicians like Roelof Temmingh, Edward Aitchison, Hanneli Rupert, Manuel Escorcio, Rosa Nepgen, Arnold van Wyk and Hubert du Plessis were the performers, with the composers sometimes slipping into the role of accompanists of songs by fellow composers.

On 14 October 1981 Nellie du Toit, accompanied by Hubert du Plessis, was the soloist in the "Quatrième soirée musicale" at Du Plessis' house in Stellenbosch. Her programme of French *mélodies* included, among others, Liszt's "Oh quand je dors" (Du Plessis 2002).

A recital entitled "Wynland Herfskonsert" on an undated programme, with the KWV "Katedraal" Cellar in Paarl as venue, possibly took place in the early eighties. Danie Louw accompanied Du Toit in a programme featuring Schubert's "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen", with clarinet accompaniment by Leon Hartshorne, and four lieder by Brahms: "Die Mainacht", "Ständchen", "Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht" and "Von ewiger Liebe". Three lieder by Liszt: "Es muss ein Wunderbares sein", "S'il est un charmant gazon" and "Oh, quand je dors" concluded the first half.

The second half opened with Fiordiligi's recitative and aria "Ei parte...Per pietà ben mio" from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, followed by "O mio babbino caro" from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. The recital ended with seven folk-songs, from Ireland, the Hebrides, Hungary, Switzerland and Norway (Programme 1981b).

## 1982

Nellie du Toit accompanied by Acáma Fick presented a recital on 23 April 1982 in the Oude Pastorie Museum in Paarl. The programme featured three *arie antiche*: "O del mio dolce ardor" by Gluck, "Il mio bel foco" by Marcello and "Chi vuol innamorarsi" by Scarlatti. The Mozart aria "Dove sono" from *Le nozze di Figaro* followed a group of five lieder by Brahms not heard before in any recital by Du Toit: "Wenn du nur zuweilen lächelst", "Es träumte mir", "Während des Regens", "Am Sonntag Morgen" and "Unbewegte laue Luft". The second half of the programme consisted of Dvořák's *Zigeunerlieder*, "Do not go my love" and "Go not happy day" – two English songs by Hageman and Bridge respectively – and two Afrikaans songs by S. le Roux Marais: "Die Roos" and "Heimwee" (Programme 1982a).

In commemoration of the sixtieth birthday of Hubert du Plessis, Nellie du Toit, accompanied by Albie van Schalkwyk, sang the song cycle *Die Vrou* Op. 7. The concert took place at the College of Music in Cape Town on 9 June 1982 (Du Plessis 2002). According to *Die Burger* a recording of these songs was broadcast on 24 August 1982 (Unidentified author 1982). Phil du Plessis (1982) regarded her interpretation as the climax of the recital while Antoinette Silvestri (1982) sang praises to Du Toit's interpretation in which "her rich and versatile voice fans the flame of the composer's thought". The composer himself praised Du Toit for being wonderfully knowledgeable ("wonderlik kundig") in her performance and interpretation of *Die Vrou* (Du Plessis 2002).

On 11 August 1982 Du Toit for the third time in her career performed *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* Op. 29 by Hubert du Plessis. The performance with the CAPAB Orchestra under Christopher Dowdeswell and the Stellenbosch University Choir took place at the Endler Hall, Conservatoire, University of Stellenbosch. A recording, which was meant for private use and not for broadcast purposes, was made of this work. (See Appendix IX.)

### 1983

An unusual ensemble work, sung in Brazilian Portuguese and accompanied by eight cellos, is *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 by Heitor Villa-Lobos. This was Nellie du Toit's contribution to the Hans Endler Memorial Fund in a programme on 23 April 1983. She was accompanied by members of the US String ensemble conducted by Eric Rycroft (Programme 1983). Yvonne Richter, the daughter of Hans Endler, sincerely thanked Du Toit for her "wonderful contribution" in a "splendid evening of fine music making" (Richter 1983).

### 1984

In a brilliant recital on 24 March 1984 at the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch, Nellie du Toit and her accompanist Acáma Fick were rewarded with a "well deserved standing ovation" as the critic Frits Stegman (1984) entitled his review of the concert. This performance can be identified as Du Toit's swansong in the art of the song recital.

Besides five Brahms lieder, Du Toit performed the Dvořák *Zigeunerlieder* and the demanding *Wesendonk Lieder* by Richard Wagner, which Stegman thought was a better interpretation and rendering than that given by a well-known Wagnerian soprano on a recent visit to Cape Town. This was Du Toit's only venture into the Wagnerian repertoire. Other items included classical opera arias by Gluck and Mozart and A. Scarlatti's canzonetta "Chi vuol innamorarsi". Stegman wrote that Nellie du Toit has not only a wonderful and versatile soprano voice, but also musicality and seriousness, which deeply moves the knowledgeable listener. He thought that both musicians were perfectionists (Stegman 1984).

Acáma Fick remarked that Du Toit always undergoes a "kind of personality transformation the moment before she steps on stage. This is quite amazing, exciting and inspirational to experience when you, as accompanist, follow her onto the stage. She then exudes an inner glow and magnetism. Nellie du Toit truly loves making music with her voice. And she wants to share it with an audience. I think that is what is meant by the expression 'true performer'" (Fick 2002b).

### 1985

On 19 May 1985 Nellie du Toit and the baritone Bernhard de Clerk, accompanied by Albie van Schalkwyk, sang a recital on the Nederburg Wine Estate, Paarl. Du Toit sang two Baroque arias namely "Bel piacere" (*Agrippina*) and "Lascia ch'io pianga" (*Rinaldo*) by Handel, and Pergolesi's "Confusa, smarrita".

Two Italian songs by Verdi featured for the first time: “In solitaria stanza” and “Perduta ho la pace”. Duets with De Clerk were by Monteverdi (“Pur ti miro”) and Handel (“Einen Kuss nur”) as well as Dvořák’s “Vergebliches Hoffen” and “Gruss aus der Ferne”. They concluded the recital with the well known Germont/Violetta duet from Verdi’s *La traviata*, “Dite alla giovine” (Programme 1985a).

In celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Prof. Richard Behrens as head of the Stellenbosch Conservatory of Music, members of the teaching staff joined in a concert on 11 August 1985. Du Toit contributed three German lieder: Schubert’s “An die Musik”, Brahms’ “Wie Melodien zieht es” and the demanding “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt” by Wolf. Her colleague Ian Smith accompanied her (Programme 1985b).

On 7 September Du Toit once more had the opportunity to sing in the famous sextet from *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This time with the University Choir of Stellenbosch conducted by Acáma Fick. On this occasion the other soloists were: this author in the mezzo-soprano part, the tenors Petrus van Heerden and Koos le Grange, the baritone Bernhard de Clerk, and Ben Illeman, bass. The concert was repeated on 26 October 1985 when it was recorded for television (Programme 1985c).

### **Singing in the late eighties and nineties**

It appears that after her *tour de force* in the portrayal of the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1986, Du Toit had bid a final farewell to concert activities *per se*, focussing her energy on her students.

Her recital with Acáma Fick in 1984 can be regarded as her swan song as lieder singer. However in her involvement with the Stellenbosch Music Society, Du Toit performed on a regular basis, mostly in a private circle.

In 2002 the author could witness a remarkable concert of Brahms’ *Liebeslieder-Walzer*, displaying Dr Du Toit’s charismatic stage presence the minute she walked on stage. She was still in “full voice”.

The group “An die Muzik [*sic*] Ensemble” comprising Dr Du Toit, Bernhard de Clerk, André Serfontein, Suzanne Erasmus, accompanied by Ian Smith and Benjamin van Eeden, performed Brahms’ *Liebeslieder-Walzer* on several occasions between March and June 2002<sup>5</sup>. However, Dr Du Toit in a most recent interview with Malan (2002) stated that she didn’t really sing any more, except for her Music Club, for friends and for her own pleasure. Furthermore, she is working on her book on literature for the voice.

#### 9.4 RADIO RECORDINGS AND APPEARANCES ON TELEVISION

Although since 1980 Du Toit focussed largely on teaching, she was not forgotten by the SABC. In the eighties Du Toit made several recordings of works by Hubert du Plessis. These include *Drie Nokturnes* Op. 36 in 1981 and *Die Vrou* Op. 7 and *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* Op. 27 in 1982. (Compare heading 9.3 – Concert Commitments).

According to tape recordings found in the SABC archives, (see Appendix IX), a sound track lasting thirty minutes was compiled in the sound archives of the SABC, on 4 October 1984 featuring a few works sung by Du Toit. These were probably recorded in the late fifties and seventies respectively. This recording features Du Toit singing “Only a rose” and “Why do I love you” with the SABC Concert Orchestra under Jeremy Schulman. It also includes the arias “Vissi d’arte” from Puccini’s *Tosca* and “In quelle trine morbide” from Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut* with the SABC Symphony Orchestra under Anton Hartman.

A recording for television made on 11 October 1985 (Appendix IX, Cat. No. TM9197 (94)), produced by Danie Botha, contains recordings of “Malie die slaaf se lied” by S. Le Roux Marais, an aria from Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, extracts from Verdi’s *La traviata*, from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* and from Verdi’s *Otello*. This TV programme, entitled *Vissi d’arte*, was reviewed by Wilhelm Grütter (1985) under the heading: “’n Puik beeld van ’n miskende diva”<sup>6</sup>.

Grütter thought that Botha succeeded in creating a complete picture of Du Toit's overall integrity as a person and as a singer, and thought that someone in the programme had aptly referred to Du Toit as South Africa’s misjudged or undervalued diva.

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<sup>5</sup> 24 March 2002, Somerset West Library Hall, (Programme 2002a).

<sup>6</sup> “An outstanding picture of a misjudged diva”.

He also remarked on the inclusion in the programme of recordings which displayed Du Toit at her best. He found that even in the latest recordings there was still that enchanting lyrical line with a rocklike basis of precise control. He concluded: “Her art is great; and to mirror the sublimity thereof so comprehensively and convincingly in a television programme, was a special achievement.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1985 there was a television recording of the concert by the University Choir of Stellenbosch, in which the Sextet from *Lucia di Lammermoor* was performed. (Compare heading 9.3 – Concert commitments.)

A programme entitled “Collage”, which dealt with Du Toit’s singing in *Der Rosenkavalier* was shown on TV early in September and reviewed by “Naguil” in *Rapport* of 7 September 1986. The reviewer was of the opinion that, with regard to her voice and acting abilities, Du Toit had no equal in [South African] opera. To the reviewer Du Toit remains the honest artist to whom art matters and not the idealising of a person (“Naguil” 1986).

On 25 October 1994, Eben Cruywagen compiled a programme for the SABC entitled *Hoorbeeld: Nellie du Toit*. (See Appendix IX.)

## 9.5 HONORARY AWARDS

Regarding Du Toit’s massive contribution to opera in South Africa, an appreciation for her cultural input seemed imminent. South Africa certainly owed Du Toit a reward for her contribution to the development of opera since the inception of the Arts Councils. Julius Eichbaum, the editor of *Scenaria*, remarked:

*In the early days managements relied almost exclusively on the established South African singer with one or two imports often of vastly inferior quality. Singers such as Gé Korsten, Nellie du Toit and Lawrence Folley, literally had to keep the flag of opera flying almost single-handedly and the contribution they made to the growth and development of opera in South Africa – even if they were not always suited to their allotted tasks, being, literally, press-ganged into certain roles – should not be overlooked.*

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<sup>7</sup> “Haar kuns is groot, en om die grootsheid daarvan so omvattend en oortuigend in ’n TV-program te weerspieël, was ’n besondere prestasie.”

On 30 September 1986 Nellie du Toit was awarded the Medal of Honour by the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences for her contribution to opera in South Africa (Programme 1986b; Stegman 1986). This was followed in 1998 by an Honorary Doctorate Degree which Stellenbosch University conferred on Du Toit (Oosthuizen 1999, 1:14). (See Appendix XII for photographs documenting these two occasions.) In appreciation for her contribution to the profession of South African classical music, the ATKV presented Dr Du Toit with a special award on 7 September 2002<sup>8</sup> (Programme 2002b).

In her speech of thanks Du Toit referred to the African renaissance pleaded for by President Thabo Mbeki. She likewise called for a renaissance: a renaissance of classical music in South Africa. Du Toit praised the ATKV for honouring the cause of classical music through their manifold activities.

## 9.6 SUMMARY

A new phase started in Du Toit's career when she was appointed **Senior Lecturer in Singing** at the **University of Stellenbosch** in **1980**. She lectured at this institution **until 1986** after which she became singing **lecturer** at the **College of Music at UCT** from **1987 to 1989**. She returned to the **University of Stellenbosch** for three more years, namely from **1990 to 1993**.

After 30 years as a performer and many years of simultaneous previous experience as teacher Du Toit then for more than **two decades** worked full time as **vocal pedagogue** on the **level of tertiary education**. This "second career" is still ongoing at present.

The list of Du Toit's **successful ex-students** following singing careers in Europe and in South Africa attests to her excellent pedagogical abilities. Her serious involvement in teaching is also documented by her attendance of **lectures and congresses** and her work as **adjudicator** and **examiner** in many South African centres.

Since Du Toit had kept her voice in shape in spite of her teaching commitments, she still made noteworthy contributions on the concert platform, notably to the **contemporary Afrikaans art song**.

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<sup>8</sup> The composers Pieter de Villiers and Stefans Grové were the other recipients.

After almost seven years of absence from the opera stage Du Toit made a **poignant come-back** with her portrayal of the role of the **Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*** by Richard Strauss. In this dignified role she finally bid farewell to the opera stage.

In recognition for her contribution to classical and light classical music in South Africa she was awarded **The Medal of Honour** by the **South African Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1986** an **Honorary Doctorate by the University of Stellenbosch in 1998** as well as a **special award by the ATKV**.



## **CHAPTER 10**

### **TESTIMONIES: NELLIE DU TOIT'S ARTISTRY AND PERSONALITY**

For an evaluation of Nellie du Toit's achievements during her career, press reviews and commentaries formed the major corpus of source material in this research project. To round off the picture of Du Toit's singing career, opinions from some artists from her peer group will be given in this chapter. They are the producers James Conrad and Angelo Gobbato (who was also a co-singer), the conductors Leo Quayle and David Tidboald, the tenors Gé Korsten and George Kok, the bass Øystein Liltved, the baritone Xander Haagen and the soprano Jeanette Bezuidenhout (Harris). Family members who gave short statements are Christine Crouse (daughter) and Marié Gaerdes (sister). The opinion of the well-known opera critic Prof. Henning Viljoen was also deemed important for this chapter.

#### **Marié Gaerdes (sister)**

Du Toit's sister, Marié Gaerdes, ten years her junior and a musician in her own right, experienced Du Toit's voice as always pure, her singing outstanding and on international level. As a professional performer Du Toit made an excellent impression on Gaerdes: Her stage appearance was outstanding, her acting abilities and stage personality that of a "natural". For Gaerdes no singer in South Africa was on a par with Du Toit, especially in terms of commitment. In short, Gaerdes regards her sister as a truly great artist. She points out the fact that in their parents home, family-life was always given priority. Likewise, Nellie du Toit also made her family her priority. Gaerdes feels that Du Toit would certainly have made a career overseas if it had not been for her loyalty and sense of responsibility to her family. She describes her sister as hiper-organised, always busy at home, knitting, cooking, dressmaking or reading when she was not singing or teaching (Gaerdes 2001a,b).

#### **Christine Crouse (daughter)**

The eldest of Nellie du Toit's four daughters, Christine Crouse, is known as a South African opera producer. She is a great admirer of her mother's art. Crouse feels that Du Toit's voice was the outstanding aspect of her artistry. To her mind Du Toit had a dramatic sense on stage and worked much on instinct. She cultivated the love for theatre in her daughter and had a great influence on her life. Crouse also stressed the fact that her mother sang extremely frequently and was a loyal worker.

She reached vocal heights and great successes and people today are still talking about her Lucia. Crouse remembers the wonderful style her mother had on stage, especially in portraying Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg. She also remembers that *Jenůfa* and *Le nozze di Figaro* were the only operas that were broadcast in the seventies. She doubts if her mother had been appreciated and honoured enough in the light of the fact that she worked extremely hard and wore herself out. The audience usually received what they expected from Du Toit.

Crouse hardly remembers her mother ever resting, except on Sunday afternoons or the afternoon or evening before a performance. As a family they went on holiday once a year and toured frequently through the country. She feels that if it was not for their father and Du Toit's husband, Philip Crouse, her mother would not have been able to pursue such a full career. Philip Crouse always remained in the background – which he did without complaining – and always supported his wife staunchly and selflessly.

#### **Jeanette Bezuidenhout (soprano)**

The South African soprano Jeannette Bezuidenhout (Harris), who was double cast with Du Toit in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for CAPAB in 1972, says that Du Toit was very professional in her performances. Bezuidenhout describes her as friendly to her co-artists and even spontaneous, but found that Du Toit would not readily mix socially with her co-artists. She possessed a capacity for hard work that was quite remarkable. When she did not sing in opera she was on tour. Bezuidenhout thought Nellie du Toit was a perfectionist. She set a good example and was incredibly single-minded and organized (Bezuidenhout (Harris) 2002).

#### **Xander Haagen (baritone, producer)**

A student of Adelheid Armhold, baritone Xander Haagen had sung with Du Toit in *Der Wildschütz* in 1963 and in *La traviata* in 1971 and had produced *Die Fledermaus* in 1968. He described Du Toit's personality as introvert. "She gave out in singing, as a person she never said what she thought" (Haagen 1999).

#### **Øystein Liltved (bass)**

The bass Øystein Liltved sang paramount and comprimario bass roles in numerous productions with Nellie du Toit (seven seasons alone for PACT between 1963 and 1973).

Liltved thinks that she was definitely in a category of her own. He describes her as a *lirico spinto* soprano who was a singing actress with a good technique and a great sense of musicality. He found that she was definitely not a “prima donna” in the negative sense of the word, since she was quiet, calm and collected and in that sense very different from many other South African sopranos. Liltved describes Du Toit as a “good buddy”. During performances he would never have to “worry about her” because she was musically secure. He thinks her Butterfly and Lucia were wonderful and that she sang a good Norma. Her soft and lyrical singing in the role of Liù is still a strong memory (Liltved 2002).

### **George Kok (tenor)**

In all nine opera seasons that Du Toit sang for PACT between 1971 and 1978, the tenor George Kok, a student of Du Toit’s since 1967, was one of her co-artists. To his mind Du Toit, who in his view had a God-given high voice, always delivered quality singing of a high standard that was reached through inherent intuition. To his mind she gave up much of her own spontaneity for the sake of her vocal art which in his opinion was based on a thorough technique and a musicality not usually found in South Africa. In Kok’s view, Du Toit was primarily a musician and then a singer. She was her own critic throughout her career. He compared her legendary, wonderful high pianissimos to those of Zinka Milanov.

As stage partner, Kok found Du Toit a very focused person with a high level of concentration who knew her work well and who had a natural histrionic talent. As a performer he found her somewhat cold in lieder recitals. Her stage appearance was slim and attractive and at its most beautiful in *La traviata*. As far as her personality is concerned, Kok had the impression that she was a very deep person. According to him, few South African sopranos who performed regularly in the country could be regarded as on a par with Du Toit (Kok 2001).

### **Gé Korsten (tenor)**

The tenor Gé Korsten is certainly the artist Du Toit performed with most frequently during her career. In the twenty-year period from 1959 to 1978 they sang together in 30 opera seasons<sup>1</sup>, uncountable concerts and recitals, including light music events, and made four joint LP records. Sadly this author could not interview Korsten personally before he passed away unexpectedly.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix VIII.

In an interview with Prof. Henning Viljoen (1987) Gé Korsten commented: (translated into English): “Nellie has that exceptional gift to exude magnetism as soon as she entered the stage. She was hard working, she transferred her honesty and integrity to her co-singers and it was always a wonderful musical experience to be able to perform with her. In the numerous duets which we sang, it seemed as if we were always on the same wave length” (Viljoen 1987).

In the article “Hulle loop ’n lang pad saam” (Unidentified author 1975a) Gé Korsten mentioned that Du Toit, being one of South Africa’s most well-known voice teachers, taught him over a period of years how to sing. It was a great pleasure to work with her because she was such an honest artist. She always made a thorough study of her music and was an organised person – a characteristic which he greatly admired. Korsten saw Du Toit as “our diva” who nonetheless never had unnecessary temperamental outbursts. Because she worked hard and demanded much of herself, she expected the same from her co-artists. She preferred however to achieve her goal with coaxing rather than with a row. She had an impressive opera repertoire and was equally at home in the field of lieder and oratorio, where the beauty of her voice and stately stage personality have given pleasure to many.

### **Henning Viljoen (music critic)**

The well-known music critic and opera connoisseur Prof. Henning Viljoen, stated that music experts as well as numerous followers of Du Toit agreed that she possessed a phenomenal stage personality as well as honesty in the pursuit of her art. This made every performance by Du Toit a unique experience. Her artistry was not only carried by her stage personality and convincing acting but was indissolubly connected to her masterly vocal control. Her voice had its own unique timbre, which she coloured with nuances in order to convey a definite interpretation of the text. Her inherent musicality was also the guarantee for her musically responsible interpretations which were true to style.

Du Toit’s professionalism and unimpeachable integrity are qualities that have been lauded by all her colleagues. Viljoen quotes a colleague who made the remark: “You will never hear Nellie saying something bad about a colleague” (Viljoen 1987).

### **Leo Quayle (conductor)**

Leo Quayle, under whose baton Nellie du Toit sang no fewer than thirteen opera seasons between 1960 and 1976 as well as numerous orchestral concerts, describes Du Toit as a most diligent artist who always thoroughly prepared and presented her roles. Prof. Quayle considers her an excellent lyric soprano and an accomplished stage performer whom he always enjoyed working with. He assesses the standard of her work as consistently high: no particular role-portrayal impressed him more than another. However, he thinks that perhaps Du Toit's portrayals of Contessa Almaviva and Jenůfa, the last opera he conducted for her, were particularly “outstanding”. Quayle considers Du Toit to be an excellent Mozart performer and particularly enjoyed her roles in that field<sup>2</sup> (Quayle 2002).

### **David Tidboald (conductor)**

Of the thirteen opera seasons which Nellie du Toit sang for CAPAB between 1963 and 1979, David Tidboald conducted six: *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* (1965), *La bohème* (1969), *Madama Butterfly* (1972), *Die Fledermaus* (1974), *La traviata* and *Otello* (1977). From the perspective of a conductor, Tidboald said his good collaboration with Du Toit was based on an unconscious give and take, which was brought about by her instinctive musicality. As an intelligent singer she brought intensity to her portrayal of characters. He found that she was somewhat withdrawn in her personality, which would sometimes come through on stage. Tidboald considered her a good actress and found her Lucia outstanding. She conveyed her simplicity very well in her portrayal of modest characters such as Micaëla, Mařenka and Martha. Tidboald, who also conducted Du Toit in Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder*, stated that it had always been a pleasure to work with her (Tidboald 2002).

### **James Conrad (producer)**

James Conrad, as Director of NAPAC opera, produced eleven operas between 1971 and 1979 in which Du Toit sang main roles<sup>3</sup>. He can be viewed as the most influential producer in the development of Du Toit's opera career in its more mature phase. Du Toit (2002b) mentioned that “James Conrad had a great knowledge of voices, having been an opera singer himself”.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Du Toit said that she worked very well with Leo Quayle whom she thought to be an excellent Mozart conductor (Du Toit 2002c). Quayle conducted three Mozart operas in which Du Toit sang the following roles: Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (1960), Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (1972) and Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* (in 1973 and 1975 respectively).

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix V.

The first time James Conrad heard Nellie du Toit sing, was at a concert by students of the College of Music presented at Stellenbosch in the early fifties. He then thought that her young voice sounded somewhat “white”. When he heard her again fifteen years later he found that her voice was more “rounded”, though it had the tendency towards vowels that sounded somewhat flat.

Conrad (2001) is of the opinion that Du Toit, during the course of her career, had a large and very flexible lyric voice and that she sang with passion and dedication (“Einsatz”). He found she coped remarkably well with the role of Lucia which, to his mind, carried her over her normal boundaries. In his opinion singing in English did not do her voice any good because it made her sing “too big”. Working on stage with her was an absolute joy. To him Du Toit normally seemed a bit shy, but she was riveting on stage. Her eyes, when she entered the stage, became luminous and she certainly possessed what he called “Ausstrahlung” and stage charisma. To his mind few singers possessed that total musicality and were as well prepared as Du Toit had always been. She sang consistently well in every performance, a trait that for a producer is of course very satisfying.

In terms of sopranos who followed a career in South Africa, he considered Joyce Barker as on a par with Du Toit, though no other local contemporary soprano had Du Toit’s wide scope of versatility. They all seemed more or less specialised in one direction. Conrad thought that singers like Mimi Coertse and Hanlie van Niekerk, who in the sixties and seventies mainly pursued their careers abroad, received much more publicity whenever they returned from Europe. He found that Du Toit never sought publicity and never pushed herself to the fore<sup>4</sup>.

She always seemed slightly withdrawn as a person and appeared an introvert off-stage, though he described Du Toit’s personality as warm and “simpatico”. As performing artist Du Toit’s professionalism certainly singled her out. She attracted many people to opera performances who normally would not attend. Conrad feels that Du Toit’s contribution did the South African opera life a tremendous favour.

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<sup>4</sup> According to *Die Burger* of 31 May 1986 Du Toit considered herself as not being a fighter. In her view music was not a “boxing ring” (Unidentified author 1986). Du Toit thought that she had good relations with colleagues and directors, perhaps because she was too easy, but being more temperamental would be “such a waste of energy” (Keill 1974).

He also thinks she stopped singing ten years too soon because she was overworked. But the fact that her opera career finished sooner than could be wished, was a blessing in disguise since it created an opportunity for full-time teaching, something that she was genuinely interested in from an early age (Conrad 2001).

### **Angelo Gobbato (baritone, producer)**

The first stage encounter between Nellie du Toit and Angelo Gobbato, the present director of Cape Town Opera and head of UCT Opera School, dates back to 1965. It marked CAPAB's inaugural production, *The Bartered Bride* (*Prodaná nevěsta*) in which Du Toit sang the role of Mařenka and Gobbato made his debut as opera singer in the role of Kecal. Between 1965 and 1971 Gobbato and Du Toit also sang together in *The Bartered Bride* for NAPAC (1965) and in several CAPAB productions such as *Carmen* (1967 and 1968), *Martha* (1968), *La bohème* (1969) and *Die Zauberflöte* (1971). As producer, Gobbato directed *Madama Butterfly* for NAPAC in 1973 as well as *Die Fledermaus* for CAPAB in 1974 with Du Toit in the leading roles.

During an interview with Prof. Gobbato in 2002, he spoke about the extreme beauty of Du Toit's voice, which he described as a wonderful lyric or *lirico spinto* soprano. In his view her wonderful portrayal of Lucia corresponded with Maria Callas' achievement. Callas had transformed Lucia, usually regarded as a *leggiere coloratura* role, into a dramatic coloratura role. The special [more dramatic] colour/timbre with which she sang this role is what made Du Toit's Lucia so exciting. He thought that she was in peak form as *Lucia*, with the additional excitement of a voice that had "challenged itself". Her portrayal of this role can still be regarded as a pinnacle in South African opera history.

Gobbato found Du Toit at her best in roles in which dramatic qualities alternated with gentle lyricism. The ethereal qualities of her voice were most impressive when the dramatic contents of a role allowed the "silver gleam" in her voice and her temperament to shine through. The strongest manifestation of this phenomenon, according to Gobbato, was heard in *Madama Butterfly* to which Du Toit's voice was uniquely suited and where she brought out the intense dramatic aspects while simultaneously portraying the young girl, Cio-Cio-San.

Gobbato stated that Du Toit's lyrical portrayal of Micaëla in *Carmen* should not be underestimated. He compared her Micaëla to that of Mirella Freni, having heard both singers in that role. In his opinion Du Toit was also underestimated with regard to her portrayal of Mozart roles – a genre in which she was given too few opportunities. He lauded her exquisite portrayal of Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Gobbato explained that in the sixties and seventies it was not possible for South African singers to “specialize”. Opera singers were compelled to take on whatever was offered, including roles that did not really suit them. In his view this was also the case with Du Toit when she had to sing roles demanding a heavier dramatic approach. He feels that the roles of Norma and of Leonora in *Il trovatore* were not to Du Toit's advantage because they require a more emotionally dramatic temperament than Du Toit intrinsically had, and therefore took a lot out of her voice. In Prof. Gobbato's view the role of Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier* also belongs in that category. However, when Du Toit sang the role of Leonora early in her career, it did not do her any harm since she approached it with intelligence and with her own, individual voice. He found Du Toit's portrayal of Jenůfa stunning.

In working with Du Toit on stage, Gobbato thought her competent, professional and uncomplicated. She would follow the direction of the producer and progress to make a role her own [internalise it] in an extremely professional way.

To Gobbato it seemed as though Du Toit's personality encompassed two women in one. During rehearsals she used to be withdrawn and quiet, in full control of herself, whereas after work – and in the company of specific individuals – a twinkle would appear and she would be a warm person, full of fun.

With regard to Du Toit's artistic partnership with Gé Korsten, Gobbato sees the balance of partnership as having been fulfilled on different levels. In his view Korsten, with his attractive looks and personality, was more at home in the lighter repertoire, while Du Toit was somewhat out of place and stood in Korsten's shadow. On the opera stage it was the other way round: Du Toit was artistically at home and at her best, whereas Korsten did not have her operatic finesse. Their partnership in the light music field was established partly for commercial reasons, although artistically it was not always perfect.



Prof. Gobbato referred to the fact that Nellie du Toit's artistic contribution as a South African opera singer was spread over a wide spectrum of roles. He is of the opinion that she would have made an even bigger career abroad, if she could have specialized in specific roles. However, she was dedicated to her family and to the South African public: a huge sacrifice in terms of potential international fame.

Gobbato feels that, as a South African singer, the general population and concert public decidedly underestimated Du Toit, but she was truly appreciated by the connoisseurs. This was partially the result of the colonial attitude of the general opera-going public in South African in whose estimation only artists with overseas experience were great. For the general public Du Toit lacked the "Glanz" of Coertse and Renzi, who had distinguished international careers. Gobbato stated that South Africans gave too little recognition for artists whose careers were home centered.

Considering Du Toit's range of roles, her wide span of repertoire, her contribution to lieder, her discipline and musicality and her excellent teaching capacities, it would be difficult to find any other South African singer who could equal Du Toit's overall contribution.

Du Toit's contribution as a singing teacher, according to Gobbato, was also underestimated. Regular vocal teaching, alongside a busy singing career, demands very much from a singer's voice. In the last instance, Du Toit's greatness and influence as a voice teacher will probably be more enduring than that of her singing career – singing careers being by nature evanescent. The influence of Du Toit's teaching can, by means of her students, spread to far areas of the world, which is more important for the ongoing process. To have been able – as Du Toit had done – to achieve a double career as singer and voice teacher, is unique. Most international singers are not good voice teachers and many fine voice teachers are not great singers.

Prof. Gobbato pointed out that South Africans, in general, lack respect for the past and have no pride in preserving their cultural heritage. During Nellie du Toit's career no proper live sound or video recordings of operas were made for historical documentation. Future generations will wonder how her voice in opera really sounded (Gobbato 2002).

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSIONS

The South African soprano Nellie du Toit is associated with **two full-fledged careers**: that of **performer** and that of **voice teacher**. Before the onset of this study the researcher was already conscious of the axiomatic nature of Du Toit's excellent reputation in both these fields. As a student of Du Toit, the quality of her teaching had been experienced empirically and her reputation in this regard therefore understood fully. But with regard to Du Toit's career as performer, which mainly took place during this author's childhood, her knowledge was meagre. This served as motivation for research on Du Toit's career in order to attain a fuller historic picture of the factors and events that contributed to Du Toit's fine reputation as South African performer.

In terms of Du Toit's career as performer, the **results of the investigations** point strongly to the conclusion that she was regarded **first and foremost** as an excellent **opera singer**. In addition she established herself as a singer of **lieder** and **oratorio** as well as a **broadcasting artist**. Her name was also associated with **light music** repertoire.

Nellie du Toit's professional South African **career in opera** spanned **almost three decades**, starting in 1957 and lasting till 1979, with a simultaneous comeback and farewell from opera in 1986 in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Her motivation for **pursuing opera studies** was grounded in her **innate musicality**, her **unique singing voice** and her **upbringing** in a very musical home. Her parents, as well as the education she received at Pretoria Afrikaans Girls' High School, were the most important influences in her childhood and teens.

Du Toit's actual involvement in opera began with her **studies** at the South African College of Music in Cape Town, from **1950** to the end of **1952**. Here her only long-term **voice teacher**, **Adelheid Armhold**, and the opera producer **Gregorio Fiasconaro**, lay the solid foundations on which her entire vocal/stage career was anchored. The only other teachers she worked with briefly were **Isobel McLaeren** (her very first teacher), **Tatiana Makushina** (in London, for role study) and **Albrecht Lewald** who helped her prepare for the Unisa Performer's Licentiate.

Du Toit had a repertoire of nine roles before she signed her **first opera contract** with the **Arts Council of Great Britain**. In England she enlarged her repertoire with three more roles.

Returning to **South Africa** in 1954 her **first opportunity** to **sing in opera** only came in **1957** when she appeared in the first production of the newly established South African Opera Association. These were the years in which Du Toit contributed to the pioneering of opera in South Africa. She sang in six productions and seven out of the twenty-six opera seasons presented by the different **opera associations** in the Transvaal during the six years before the inception of the National Arts Councils. After that she appeared almost uninterruptedly on the opera stage.

In the previous political dispensation in South Africa the four provincial **Arts Councils** started functioning in 1963. Du Toit made regular contributions to opera for all four Arts Councils. The only year in which she was not heard in any opera production in South Africa was 1970, when she participated in the second International Madame Butterfly competition in Japan. In the seventeen years **between 1963 and 1979** she sang in **forty-five seasons** for the four Arts Councils of which **seventeen** were for **PACT**, **thirteen** for **NAPAC**, **eleven** for **CAPAB**, and **four** for **PACOFs**.

Between 1957 and 1986 Du Toit added **twenty-four more opera roles** to her repertoire (including *Die Fledermaus*, which strictly speaking resorts under the operetta genre), **as well as three roles sung in concert version**. In **total** her opera repertoire, (including *Die Fledermaus*) consisted of **forty-one roles**.

Considering the **scale of frequency of opera roles sung by Du Toit**, the title role of the opera *Madama Butterfly* heads the list with eight seasons between 1957 and 1976. This brings up the question whether the general perception that she sang this role some 180 times is not rather exaggerated. Considering that each season consisted of an average of about eleven performances, the sum total could not have exceeded ninety performances in that role. It was as “Butterfly” that Du Toit proved her calibre as **opera singer of world class rating** when she was chosen as seventh out of the eight best contestants in the second **International Madame Butterfly Competition** in Japan in 1970. This event also marked her only professional appearance as opera singer beyond the borders of Southern Africa, apart from the period with the British Arts Council on completion of her studies in Cape Town.

**Second** on the frequency scale of operas sung by Du Toit is Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, of which she sang five seasons.

This was initiated in 1969 with her sensational debut in the coloratura role of Lucia for CAPAB, which was considered a milestone in South African opera history. **Third** on the frequency scale are *Die Fledermaus* and *Il trovatore*, with four seasons each, although she had to cancel all but one performance of her fourth season of *Il trovatore*, due to ill health. **Fourthly**, Du Toit sang three seasons of *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *La traviata*. **Fifth** on the frequency scale were two seasons of *Norma*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Carmen* and *La bohème* (Mimi). Operas in which she appeared for **one season only** were *La bohème* (Musetta), *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina), (Queen of the Night), *Martha*, *Don Giovanni* (Donna Anna), *Tosca*, *Turandot* (Liù), *Jenůfa*, *Faust* and *Otello*.

Du Toit sang in **three operas in concert version**: *Der Freischütz* (Agathe), *Giulio Cesare* (Cleopatra) and *Der Rosenkavalier* in which she portrayed the mezzo-soprano role of Octavian.

The **Nederburg Opera Prize** was awarded to Du Toit on **three occasions**: in 1973 for her portrayal of Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* for CAPAB; in 1975 for her Lucia for PACT the previous year; and in 1975 for her *Tosca*, sung for PACOFS.

Du Toit favoured **bel canto roles**, although she had sung only two, namely Donizetti's Lucia and Bellini's Norma. She also had an affinity for the **Italian repertoire** and roles by Verdi (Leonora, Violetta and Desdemona) and Puccini (Cio-Cio-San, Liù, Mimi, Musetta and Tosca). She also sang one opera role by Pergolesi and Giordano respectively.

Nellie du Toit was also hailed as **Mozart singer**, although she had sung only four Mozart opera roles on stage. The study brought to light that she sang all three seasons of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* in Afrikaans, as well as both seasons of *Die Zauberflöte* in which she portrayed Pamina and the Queen of the Night respectively. *Don Giovanni* was sung in English.

She appeared in **two French operas**, *Carmen* and *Faust*, both sung in the original French.

The only **German opera production** in which Du Toit could sing in the original language was *Der Rosenkavalier* (1986) when she portrayed the Marschallin. She did previously sing the roles of Octavian (see above) and Agathe in *Der Freischütz* in German, but in concert version. *Der Wildschütz* (stage production) was sung in Afrikaans. It is striking that the only time Du Toit ever sang in German in a full stage production was in *Der Rosenkavalier* – her operatic swan-song.

This can only partially be attributed to the possible fact that Du Toit did not feel as much at home in the German opera repertoire as in the Italian. It really illustrates the limitations of the Arts Councils, who for many years did not present any opera in German.

Even when considering the operetta *Die Fledermaus* as the lightest of operas, one notices that she always sang it in the Afrikaans translation. This was the **only operetta** in her repertoire apart from the school operetta *Prinses Pirliwinkie*, in which she made her debut at the age of seventeen.

The conclusion can therefore be drawn that Du Toit made a significant contribution to **opera sung in the Afrikaans language**. In 1958 she sang two **world premières** in Afrikaans namely the radiophonic opera *Asterion* by Henk Badings and the première of the Afrikaans version of the South African composer John Joubert's one-acter *In the drought*. Other operas sung in Afrikaans translations were *La bohème*, *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina; Queen of the Night), *Der Wildschütz*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Die Fledermaus*. Du Toit thus sang **eight opera roles in Afrikaans**.

Original **Italian operas sung in English** (for PACT), were Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, *La traviata* and *La bohème*. The original **Czech operas** by Smetana and Janáček, *Prodaná nevěsta* and *Jenůfa* respectively, were sung in the English translation. It is questionable whether the singing of Italian operas in English translations was vocally to her (or any singer's) advantage, since the open vowels of the Italian language are more favourable in terms of the placing of the voice and contribute to the brilliance of tone quality. One wonders therefore whether the repeated singing of Italian operas in translations was not detrimental to the vocal aspect of the opera.

The Arts Councils seemed to have a predilection for **operas presented in the vernacular Afrikaans or English**. This policy seems to illustrate a lack of faith on the part of South African opera managements in the musical background knowledge and general intelligence of their potential audiences. It simultaneously illustrates tendencies in the **cultural history** of South Africa. The National Party had been South Africa's ruling political party from 1948 till 1994. During the Apartheid years and the heyday of Afrikaner-Nationalism, Afrikaans was employed on a great scale to foster music consciousness among Afrikaners, and Western art music was regarded as an indispensable part of Afrikaner "high culture".

Undoubtedly the employment of Afrikaans was also part of the philosophy of enhancement of the general use of the Afrikaans language. With reference to opera productions the motivation seemed to lie in the assumption that this foreign language music genre would become more accessible and comprehensible to South African audiences — especially operas with an intricate and/or comical plot. (A singer from Great Britain even had to learn her role in Afrikaans.)

However, the tendency to sing opera in the vernacular was fairly widespread overseas until the latter part of the twentieth century. The recent advent of the surtitles in the vernacular, today eliminates the need for opera translations and leads back to opera presentations in the original language.

This study also brought to light that, during Du Toit's career, only two **operas** were ever **broadcast on SABC radio**: *Le nozze di Figaro* sung in Afrikaans for PACT in 1973 and *Jenůfa* sung in English for PACT in 1976.

This study proved to be enlightening with regard to many fine South African singers (co-artists/colleagues of Du Toit) whose names are not known among the younger generation of musicians. But the **stage partner** who sang the most principal male roles opposite those of Du Toit was undoubtedly the tenor **Gé Korsten**, who is still remembered by most South Africans. This research established that in the twenty years of their opera partnership – between 1959 and 1978 – Du Toit and Korsten shared the opera stage in **thirty seasons**. Of these, twenty-eight seasons featured them in leading roles (see Appendix VII). The distribution of these seasons over the years is as follows: one season in the fifties, nine in the sixties – one of them an opera in concert version – and twenty in the seventies. Of the operas sung with Korsten, *Lucia di Lammermoor* heads the list with five seasons, followed by *Madama Butterfly*. It seems as if there were no other tenors in South Africa at that stage to sing the roles sung by Korsten. Du Toit's **second most frequent tenor-partner** was **Gert Potgieter** who sang with her in 8 operas: two leading roles in the late fifties and two in the sixties. The remaining figure comprised comprimario roles sung by Potgieter in the sixties and early seventies. **Other South African tenors** who sang principal roles opposite Du Toit were Lloyd Strauss Smith, Nicola Cencherle, George Kok, Stephen Tudor and Luigi Bianco. **Tenors from overseas** were Michael Trimbel, Sergio Galli, Bruno Prevedi and Alberto Remedios.

**Baritones** and **basses** with whom Du Toit shared the stage included Frederick Dalberg, Xander Haagen, George Fourie, Bob Borowsky, Jaco van der Merwe, Øystein Liltved, Dawie Couzyn, Hans van Heerden, Lawrence Folley, Kenneth Reynolds, Rudi Neitz and, from overseas, Nicola Zaccaria. South African **mezzo-sopranos** included Evelyn Dalberg, Sarita Stern, Bets Botha, Carla Pohl, Nohline Mitchell, Ilse Lotz and Jean Stuart. Nedda Casei, Mirna Pecile and Adriana Stamenova hailed from abroad.

**Sopranos** with whom Du Toit was **double cast** in certain roles were Saline Koch, Emma Renzi, Joyce Barker, Gudrun Barrella, Jeanette Bezuidenhout, Leonore Veenemans and Rikie Venter.

The conductor **Leo Quayle** features most prominently among the **opera conductors** under which Du Toit performed during her career between 1957 and 1979. She sang thirteen seasons under his baton, not to mention numerous orchestral concerts. Du Toit sang six seasons under David Tidboald, four seasons under Franco Ferraris, Bryan Balkwill and John Pryce-Jones, three seasons under George Hudson and Anton Hartman. She sang one season with each of the following conductors: Jeremy Schulman, Georg Gruber, Charles Denholm, Georg Tintner, Neil Chapman, Carl Fischer, Terence Kern and Karl-Heinz Dold.

Among the **producers** Du Toit worked with, **James Conrad** heads the list with twelve seasons in which Du Toit sang the principal soprano role. Of these, four were re-stagings of which Du Toit had sung in the original productions. **Gregorio Fiasconaro** directed five operas in the course of Du Toit's professional career. However, taking into account the seven student productions that he directed, Fiasconaro was the producer Du Toit worked with most frequently. Fiasconaro and Conrad can therefore be seen as influential in the development of her artistry and opera persona. Both had the asset of having been opera singers themselves, a boon for Du Toit since they could judge her vocal capacities and accordingly offer her roles that would really suit her voice.

Du Toit sang in four operas produced by **Hermien Dommissie**, all in Afrikaans, four seasons directed by the **German producer Peter Ebert**, of which two were re-stagings, and four seasons with **Neels Hansen** as producer. **Victor Melleney** and **Jan Bouws jr** each produced three seasons. **Angelo Gobbato**, **Leonard Schach** and the Iranian producer **Enayat Rezai** each produced two seasons in which Du Toit sang principal roles.

**Joy Shearer, Conrad Haikes**, the Austrian producers **Josef Witt** and **Peter Brenner**, the Greek producer **Dino Yannopoulos**, **Ande Anderson** from Covent Garden and **Murray Dickie** all directed Du Toit in one opera only, while **Xander Haagen** and **Frederick Dalberg** each produced *Die Fledermaus* once.

In order to **compare the frequency of Du Toit's operatic appearances with that of other well-known South African sopranos**, the author investigated the operas presented by the largest Arts Council, PACT.

The conclusion reached is as follows: in the sixteen years between 1963 and 1978, (the last year in which Du Toit sang for PACT), she sang the leading roles in sixteen seasons. In comparison Joyce Barker, a South African soprano of Du Toit's vocal standing, only sang in nine seasons. Mimi Coertse and Emma Renzi, who at that time made their careers in Europe, both sang in four PACT operas in that time span. South African sopranos such as Rita Roberts and Leonore Veenemans were heard four times in opera in the Transvaal in that time span. In the sixteen years under surveillance, Du Toit sang on average one opera per year for PACT. It becomes clear that no other South African soprano had performed for PACT on such a regular basis within that period of almost two decades.

Taking into consideration the nature of the roles that Du Toit portrayed most often, some conclusions can be drawn with regard to her **vocal scope** from a **Fach point of view**. This is however done with realisation of the fact that it is an aspect of the art of singing where contradictory views are held, and in admission of the overlapping character of different *Fächer*.

Starting off with a small, light voice in the first year of her studies, Du Toit already showed inclinations in the direction of *Madama Butterfly's* Cio-Cio-San, a *lirico spinto* role in which she made her professional opera debut in South Africa in 1957. According to critics, her voice, described during her student years as "pure", "soubrette", had gradually acquired a "remarkable fullness of tone" becoming a "glorious rich soprano" with "exquisite pianissimos". In its more mature stage it was described as having gained a "lovely darker quality" with "warmth and beauty of the lower register [as well as] a strong and well placed upper register". In her formative years it became evident that she had a predisposition for the lyrical dramatic repertoire into which she developed gradually.



Although initially regarded as **lyrical soprano** and singing roles such as Micaëla, Mařenka and Pamina, Du Toit soon showed inclinations towards a “heavier” *Fach*. Before eventually settling in the *lirico spinto Fach* in the seventies, Du Toit ventured into the realms of the **lyric and dramatic coloratura soprano** as represented by the title role in Flotow’s *Martha* and the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*). Du Toit found that the latter role did in fact not suit her and that she should not have sung it.

Other **dramatic coloratura soprano** roles sung by Du Toit were Leonora (*Il trovatore*), Violetta (*La traviata*), the title role in Bellini’s *Norma* and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*). Other roles (i.e. apart from “Butterfly”) relating to the *Fach jugendlich dramatisch* or *lirico spinto*, were the Contessa Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Mimì (*La bohème*), Desdemona (in Verdi’s *Otello*), Marguerite (in Gounod’s *Faust*), Madeleine (*Andrea Chénier*) and Jenůfa (in Janáček’s *Jenůfa*). The only two opera roles sung in the **dramatic soprano Fach** were the title role in Puccini’s *Tosca* and the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* by Strauss.

With reference to Du Toit’s career as **solo recitalist**, the following: she often **shared recitals** with another soloist – either singer or instrumentalist. Her recitals had variety with a **repertoire** spanning **different genres** that, apart from *arie antiche*, German lieder and art songs in other languages, often included opera/operetta arias and duets (in the case of a recital shared with another singer). It seems as though pure lieder recitals were a rarity during the time period investigated for this study. Audiences in general preferred a mixture of opera and lieder, as well as the inclusion of another artist to share the programme. In the 1980’s Du Toit’s lieder recitals displayed her vocal maturity in song cycles such as Wagner’s *Wesendonk Lieder*, Dvořák’s *Zigeunerlieder* and Hubert du Plessis’ *Die Vrou*.

During her career Du Toit worked with many **accompanists**. In Great Britain she sang with the well-known accompanist **Geoffrey Parsons**. In South Africa, **Hennie Joubert** was Du Toit’s most frequent accompanist. **Anna Bender** accompanied her mainly for SABC recordings and also some concerts. Pianists who accompanied Du Toit on recital tours were **Albie Louw**, **Lionel Bowman**, **Laura Searle**, **Susan Steenkamp** and **Sini van den Brom**. Other accompanists included Verity Griesel, Stefaans Zondagh, José Rodriquez-Lopez, Rupert Mayr, Ian Smith, Dalene Steenkamp-Swanepoel, Jacqueline Martens, Johan Potgieter, Russel Channel and the composers Lourens Faul, Pieter de Villiers and Hubert du Plessis. Albie van Schalkwyk and Acáma Fick accompanied Du Toit in some recitals in the eighties.

Du Toit's involvement in opera was not restricted to theatre productions only. In **concerts with orchestral accompaniment** she often sang **arias from operas** that she sadly never had the opportunity to portray on stage. In many of these orchestral concerts she teamed up with **singing partners**, mostly **Gé Korsten**, with an average of at least two joint orchestral concerts per year. In the late 1950s and early 1960s she often teamed up with the tenor **Gert Potgieter**. Baritone partners were **Noel Cilliers, Jaco van der Merwe, George Fourie** and **Bob Borowsky**.

**Arias and duets** that featured most often **in her recital repertoire** included the following:

**Opera arias:**

**Bellini:** "Casta diva" – *Norma*; "Oh quante volte" – *I Capuletti e i Montecchi*, "Qui la voce" – *I puritani*

**Borodin:** "Arioso di Jaroslavna" – *Prince Igor*

**Catalani:** "Ebben, ne andrò lontano" – *La Wally*

**Donizetti:** "O luce di quest' anima" – *Linda di Chamounix*

**Flotow:** "Letze Rose" – *Martha*

**Giordano:** "Ecco respiro appena" – *Adriana Lecouvreur*

**Gounod:** "Waltz Song" – *Romeo et Juliette*

**Meyerbeer:** "O nobles seigneurs, salut" – *Les Huguenots*

**Mozart:** "Non so più" – *Le nozze di Figaro*; "Martern aller Arten" – *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, "Der Hölle Rache" – *Die Zauberflöte*

**Puccini:** "Vissi d'arte" – *Tosca*; "In quelle trine morbide" – *Manon Lescaut*; "Sì, mi chiamano Mimi", "Donde lieta uscì" – *La bohème*; "O mio babbino caro" – *Gianni Schicchi*

**Rossini:** "Bel raggio lusinghier" – *Semiramide*

**Thomas:** Ophelia's "Mad Scene" – *Hamlet*

**Verdi:** "Ah! fors' è lui" and "Addio del passato" – *La traviata*; "Mercè, dilette amiche" – *I vespri siciliani*; "Ritorna vincitor" – *Aida*; "O nel fuggente nuvolo" and "Santo di patria" – *Attila*; "Willow Song" – *Otello*; "Pace, pace" – *La forza del destino*; "Ernani, Ernani involami" – *Ernani*.

**Opera duets:**

**Donizetti:** "Notturmo", "Tornami a dir" – *Don Pasquale*; "Il pallor funeste", "Sulla tomba che rinserra" – *Lucia di Lammermoor*

**Leoncavallo:** "Silvio a quest' ora" – *I pagliacci*

**Mozart:** "La ci darem la mano" – *Don Giovanni*

**Puccini:** duets from *La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*,

**Verdi:** “Brindisi”, “Un dì felice”, “Dite alla giovine”, “Parigi, o cara” – *La traviata*; “O terra addio” – *Aida*; “Tutte le feste”, “E il sole dell’ anima” – *Rigoletto*

### **Operetta arias**

**Dostal:** “Ich bin verliebt” – *Clivia*

**Lehár:** “Vilja Lied” – *Die lustige Witwe*

**Lehár :** “Liebe, du Himmel auf Erden” – *Paganini*

**Strauss:** “Czardas” – *Die Fledermaus*, “Wien, Wien nur du allein”,

### **Operetta duets:**

**Friml:** “Only a rose” – *The Vagabond King*

**Lehár:** “Niemand liebt dich so wie ich” – *Paganini*; “Waltz” – *Die lustige Witwe*

**Romberg:** “Deep in my heart” – *The Student Prince*

**Strauss:** “One day when we were young”

**Zeller:** “Schenkt man sich Rosen” – *Der Vogelhändler*

Du Toit's **concert repertoire** included, apart from Mozart concert arias, works such as Mahler's Symphony No. 4, Britten's *Les illuminations* and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. She sang the world première of Hubert du Plessis' *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* and performed *Vier letzte Lieder* by Strauss in 1980.

Apart from the occasionally sung oratorio/cantata arias in recitals, Du Toit sang in the following **oratoria/related genres:** Handel's *Messiah*, the oratorio she performed most often (1952, 1954, 1970, 1972 in Afrikaans,) and *Judas Maccabaeus* (1965); Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* in Afrikaans (1958, 1962); Bach's *Johannes-Passion* (in English in 1965); Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the renowned French baritone Gérard Souzay; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 and *Mass in C major*; Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*; Mozart's motet *Exsultate jubilate*.

**Conductors** under whom Du Toit sang in **concert/oratorio/related genres** included Werner Andreas Albert, Solly Aronowsky, Neil Chapman, Jos Cleber, Edgar Cree, Anton Hartman, Eberhard Künkel, Lorin Maazel, Herbert Menges, John Pryce-Jones, Leo Quayle, André Ras, Jeremy Schulman, Fritz Schuurman and Robert Zeller.

Nellie du Toit's fame as South African soprano can partially be traced to her involvement in **light (popular) music**. That she made a name for herself in this genre can be largely attributed to the fact that she teamed up once again with the tenor **Gé Korsten**, who was talented in organising shows in a lighter vein. These shows and concerts became very popular, especially in rural areas. In fact, many South Africans today remember Du Toit solely in association with Gé Korsten, with whom she toured the length and breadth of Southern Africa with programmes that, apart from the popular music, also contained classical and opera items. These presentations had a double spin-off: it familiarised audiences with the concept of opera music, which in turn motivated them to attend opera productions in which Du Toit and Korsten featured.

The popular Korsten-Du Toit duo is documented on **four LP records** entitled *Soet Herinnering*, *Sweethearts*, *Night of Love* and *The Student Prince*. Du Toit also shared the leading roles in two **musicals** with Korsten: *The Desert Song* and *The Student Prince*. It seems that Du Toit's involvement in light music as partner of Gé Korsten came about primarily because she was also his vocal teacher. It probably also had a financial motivation. Whether the light music genres could be considered as her *forte* is doubtful, since her personality and vocal disposition lend itself more to serious/art music.

From the mid-1950s the medium of **broadcasting** made the name of Nellie du Toit known countrywide through transcription recordings as well as live broadcasts. This trend continued well into the late sixties. In the seventies her increased involvement in opera left little time for radio work, though **two operas** were **broadcast**: *Le nozze di Figaro* (transmitted live in 1973) and *Jenûfa* (broadcast in 1976). In the early eighties she still recorded Hubert du Plessis' *Drie Nokturnes* and *Die Vrou* for the SABC.

The **only documentation of Du Toit's voice that have been preserved for posterity**, date from her time as recording artist for the SABC. It can be regarded as a sad omission that her full capacities as opera singer were not preserved for future generations. Considering the plethora of SABC audio-material recorded by hundreds of artists in the previous political dispensation, it was apparently impossible to keep everything. Had it not been for the visionary James Williams, long time sound producer at the SABC, there would probably be no audio-documentation of Du Toit, as serious artist, left available. Williams held that certain recordings of Du Toit's should be saved for their historical/documentary value, therewith stemming the tide of total extinction of recorded music in order to create space for new recordings.

The vanishing from the SABC's archives, after 1994, of much recorded music from previous years, is a rumour hopefully not totally grounded in fact.

Du Toit's only two **LP solo records** are: *Nellie du Toit sings for your pleasure/sing vir u genot* with Hennie Joubert as accompanist, and *Die Laaste Somerros*, with the accompaniment of the Newkirk Orchestra. These records document her voice in some art songs and folksongs. The only **compact disc** available on the market is a remastering of recordings made mainly by the SABC. It contains only four opera arias, which stand in no relation to her total contribution to this genre. The aria from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, for instance, was recorded live during a lunch hour performance.

In the course of this study it became evident that Du Toit made a considerable **contribution to music sung in the Afrikaans** language. With reference to opera it has been summarised above. Those achievements can be attributed to her willingness to sing operas in the Afrikaans translation although she preferred to sing in the original language. Du Toit also sang the soprano role/part in **four world premières** of original large-scale **Afrikaans compositions**: Apart from *In die Droogte* and *Asterion* (mentioned above), she also premièred Henk Badings' cantata *Ballade van die Bloeddorstige Jagter* in 1970 and Hubert du Plessis' *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* in 1966, a work she performed on two more occasions. Du Toit furthermore promoted the **music of Du Plessis** by singing the first performance of *Drie Nokturnes* and performing his outstanding song cycle *Die Vrou*, dedicated to Hanlie van Niekerk. Works by the South African composers Douglas Reid and Paul Loeb van Zuilenburg were premièred by Du Toit. Her repertoire of **Afrikaans art songs** also comprised works by (i.a.) Pieter de Villiers, Blanche Gerstman, Ernst Löwenherz, S. le Roux Marais and Arnold van Wyk. She sang two **oratorios in Afrikaans**: *Messias* (Handel) and *Die Skepping* (Haydn). (From a cultural-historical perspective these presentations of oratoria from the Western musical canon in Afrikaans translations are interesting phenomena that this researcher could, from a psychological/political perspective, not investigate fully since it falls outside the research demarcation for this study.)

Sometimes Du Toit teamed up with obligato instruments or an **instrumental ensemble** in works such as Schubert's *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, Spohr's six songs for soprano and clarinet, arias from Bach cantatas, Zilcher's *Marienlieder*, Villa-Lobos' *Bacchianas Brasileiras*, and Douglas Reid's *Four Movements for Soprano, Baritone and Eight Instruments*.

In the early 1970s Du Toit sang with Pieter de Villiers' **Overvaal Ensemble**, performing among others Brahms' *Liebeslieder-Walzer*, which she also performed as recently as 2002.

Du Toit's **career as voice teacher** began in the late 1950's. Her pedagogic activities continued at the Pretoria Afrikaans Girls' High School between 1957 and 1959, where she taught class singing. Her school choir and pupils excelled at eisteddfodau. From 1960 to 1962 Du Toit lectured singing at the Pretoria Conservatoire for Music where she also produced Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. After 1962 she set up a **private teaching studio** at home, which was more compatible with raising a family. Throughout her career as performer she always had a considerable number of students.

After the completion of her opera career she, in 1980, started a **full-time academic career** as senior lecturer in singing at the Department of Music, **University of Stellenbosch**. From 1987 to the end of 1989 she was lecturer in singing at the South African College of Music, **University of Cape Town**. In 1990 she returned to her former position at the University of Stellenbosch and retired at the end of 1994, having worked ten years in total at this institution.

From 1994 to the present, Du Toit continued her pedagogic activities in her private studio. She is still sought-after by many professional singers as vocal advisor. Among her **students of distinction** is the mezzo-soprano **Michelle Breedt**, who is contracted to the Vienna State Opera and has sung in Bayreuth. Another ex-student, **Virginia Davids**, now Associate Professor in singing at the College of Music, Cape Town, has made name for herself as one of South Africa's most sought-after sopranos in recent years. Many of Nellie du Toit's students and ex-students sing professionally. Currently twelve of them follow careers in Europe and Great Britain. This alone is an eloquent testimonial to her excellent teaching methods.

Du Toit's serious interest in and love for vocal tuition have been documented by her attendance of various workshops and **conferences** for voice teachers in the United States, Europe and South Africa. She has served on **adjudicating panels** for the UNISA International Singing Competition (1999) and for various eisteddfodau. She regularly acts as external examiner for various higher academic institutions.

Nellie du Toit is the recipient of several **awards**: three **Nederburg Prizes for Opera**, the **medal of Honour of the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences**, an **ATKV-honorary award** and an **Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of Stellenbosch**. This in itself testifies clearly that she was (and still is) an artist of outstanding talent and dedication who is held in great esteem.

From the perspective of the current status quo in terms of the opera life in South Africa, the opportunities available to South African singers in the previous political dispensation in retrospect seems comparatively like a “Golden Age”. Having investigated Nellie du Toit’s singing career from available source material with the utmost possible precision, this author reached the conclusion that her contribution to the art of singing in South Africa during the years 1957 to 1986 was much greater and more significant than assumed at the onset of the research. Her artistic output encompassed even more than what could be researched, since it proved to be impossible to retrieve programmes of all of her performances. This study naturally leads to the **recommendation** that the life and work of other noteworthy South African performers should be researched and documented.

In *Scenario* of November 1986 Henning Viljoen aptly wrote:

*Nellie du Toit is undoubtedly one of the greatest South African singers to dominate the opera scene over the last two and a half decades. A singer who will definitely be recorded in the opera history of this country for many memorable performances [...] which, judging by international standards, can be favourably compared with the best in the world. [...] Nellie will always be hailed for the honesty in the interpretation of her art, her dedication and professionalism as well as the major contribution she has made to the South African opera scene.*

The above appreciation pertained to Nellie du Toit, the opera singer. Hopefully this study contributes to a more holistic picture of her varied career, her passionate and significant contribution to South African concert life in all its vocal manifestations, and her inspiring contribution to the art of teaching.

Nellie du Toit is a remarkable musician and singer. On stage she was a diva. Her artistic legacy is well worth including in the **annals of South African history of music**.

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## **PROGRAMMES**

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Programme 1950. *Beatrice and Benedict*.

Programme 1950b. Cape Town Municipality. Concert. City Hall 26 November. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Noreen Berry (alto), Manuel Villet (piano).

Programme 1951a. Port Elizabeth Orchestral Society. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Noreen Berry (contralto), Serah van Praag (violin), Manuel Villet (piano). 12 February.

Programme 1951b. Queenstown and District Music Club. Vocal and Instrumental Recital. Town Hall, Queenstown. 19 February.

Programme 1951c. Third Orchestral Concert. 15 June.

Programme 1951d. Arts Festival Concert. University Music Society. Hiddingh Hall Concerts. 7 September.

Programme 1951e. *Sister Angelica; La Serva Padrona*. 17 September.

Programme 1951f. Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. Enrique Jorda (conductor). City Hall, Cape Town. 15 December.

Programme 1952a. Van Riebeeck Festival of Music and Drama. Cape Town. 1952.

Programme 1952b. Van Riebeeck Festival 1952. International Festival of Music and Drama. First Historical Concert. 6 March.

Programme 1952c. *The Messiah*. Metropolitan Church, Greenmarket Square. 11 April.

Programme 1952d (s.a. - assumed 1952). The Federation of Music Societies (Eastern Cape). *Sister Angelica; La Serva Padrona; The Telephone; The Medium*. 28 April – 10 May.

Programme 1953. University of Cape Town, Opera Tour. Southern Rhodesia. February.

Programme 1954a. Joint recital by Adelaide Newman (piano), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Constance Brothwood (accompanist). Durban. 18 July.

Programme 1954b. South African Music and Theatre Association: Marcel Wittrisch, Nellie du Toit, Albie Louw. September, October.

Programme 1954c (s.a. – assumed 1954). Sanguitvoering: Nellie du Toit. Pietersburg. 15 November.

Programme 1954d (s.a. - assumed 1954). Intimate Theatre Club: “Intimate Delights”, an Elizabethan Evening. (Assumed 19 December).

Programme 1954e. *The Messiah*. Pietermaritzburg Philharmonic Society. 20 December.

Programme 1955a. Iscor Orchestra. Joseph Trauneck (conductor). 20 May.

Programme 1955b (s.a. - assumed 1955). Nellie du Toit (soprano), Walter Dignas (piano), Robert E. Selly (accompanist). Port Elizabeth Orchestral Society. June 28.

Programme 1957a. *Madam Butterfly*. National Opera Association of South Africa.

Programme 1957b. *Madame Butterfly*. Durban, Alhambra Theatre. 1-9 October.

Programme 1957c. Kunsconcert. Nellie du Toit (sopraan), Jack de Wet (violis), Noel Cilliers (bariton), Stefaans Zondagh (begeleier). 20 November.

Programme 1958a. SABC Chamber Music Concert. Kathleen Alister Trio. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Anna Bender (piano). 9 March.

Programme 1958b. The Free State Music Society: Concert by Nellie Du Toit (soprano), Walter Mony (violinist), Sini van den Brom (pianist). Bloemfontein. 18 April.

Programme 1958c. Die Afrikaanse Musiekkklub van Pretoria: *Die Skepping*. Sangluskoor en soliste onder leiding van David J. Roode. 25 June.

Programme 1958d. Universiteit Pretoria. Inwyding van die Aula. *Die Skepping*. Sangluskoor en soliste onder leiding van David J. Roode. 31 October.

Programme 1958e. Orrel en sanguitvoering. Hennie Joubert (orrel), Nellie du Toit (sopraan). 9 November.

Programme 1958f. *Symphony No. 9* in D (Beethoven). SABC Symphony Orchestra. Anton Hartman (conductor). City Hall, Johannesburg. 25 November.

Programme 1958g. South African Federation for Opera: Opera Season. 1958.

Programme 1959a. G. F. Handel - Commemoration Concert. SABC Concert Orchestra. Anton Hartman (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gert Potgieter (tenor), Wilfred Hutchings (bass). City Hall, Johannesburg. 18 May.

Programme 1959b. *La Bohème*. South African Federation for Opera. Repts Theatre, Johannesburg. 10-17 June.

Programme 1959c. Music Society Klerksdorp: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano). 21 November.

Programme 1960a. Johannesburg Musical Society: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Anna Bender (accompanist), Alain Naudé (piano). Selborne Hall. 3 February.

Programme 1960b. Kunsfees in die Aula – Festival of Arts. March – June.

Programme 1960c. Official Festival Programme: Festival of Union 1960. Bloemfontein. March 12 – May 31.

Programme 1960d. SABC Symphony Orchestra. Anton Hartman (conductor). 27 May.

Programme 1960e. Festival Opera Season 1960. S. A. Federation for Opera: *Die Towerfluit*. s.d.

Programme 1960f. *Madam Butterfly*. Aula, Pretoria. 21 March.

Programme 1960g. The Jewish Guild Young People's Augmented Orchestra. Dr Solly Aronowsky (conductor), Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. Wits University. 3 April.

Programme 1960h. Music Festival Germiston City Hall. Pro-Musica Orchestra. Anton Harman (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gert Potgieter (tenor). 23 April.

Programme 1960i. Symphony Concert. SABC Symphony Orchestra. Edgar Cree (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), George Fourie (baritone). 9 August.

Programme 1960j. The People to People Committee of the Arts for Southern Africa in association with the People to People Programme of the United States of America: Concert. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Anna Bender (accompanist), Adolph Hallis (piano). 12 September.

Programme 1960k. Operatic Highlights: Durban Civic Orchestra. Fritz Schuurman (conductor), Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. 22 September.

Programme 1961. Cape Town Municipal Orchestra. "In spring a young man's fancy". Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten, David Tidboald (conductor). City Hall. November 5.

Programme 1962a. Sondagaandkonsert: Bach arias met oblikaat-instrumente. Konservatorium vir Musiek. Pretoria. 29 April.

Programme 1962b. *Dido and Aeneas*. Nellie du Toit (producer), Willem Mathlener (conductor). 4 May.

Programme 1962c. The Grahamstown Music Club: Nellie du Toit (lyric soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano). City Hall. 4 October.

Programme 1962d. Afrikaanse Musieklklub van Pretoria: *Die Skepping*. Sangluskoor. Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten, Rudi Neitz, André Ras (dirigent). 21 November.

Programme 1963a. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano), Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir C. H. O. 10 May.

Programme 1963b. Grahamstown Music Club: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Dr Rupert Mayr (piano). 1 August.

Programme 1963c. Pretoria Operagroep: *Die Wilddief*. Aula. 27 August, 2, 3 September.

Programme 1963d. George Music Society: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gert Potgieter (tenor), Hennie Joubert (accompanist). 17 October.



Programme 1963e (s.a. - assumed 1963/1964). Nellie du Toit, Hennie Joubert, Derek Ochse. Presented by PACT.

Programme 1964a. Strauss Centenary Concert. *Der Rosenkavalier* (excerpts). Joyce Barker, Nellie du Toit, Jossie Boshoff. SABC Symphony Orchestra. Anton Hartman (conductor). City Hall, Johannesburg. 9 June.

Programme 1964b. PACT: *Il Trovatore*. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. Aula, Pretoria. Civic Theatre, Klerksdorp. August/September.

Programme 1964c. SUKOFs/PACOFs Kersmusiekaand/Music for Christmas. November.

Programme 1964d. Society of South African Composers – Prize Winners Concert. 29 November.

Programme 1964e (s.a. - assumed 1964). NAPAC presents Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten, Jacqueline Martens (accompanist).

Programme 1965a. 2 concertos pela Orquestra Sinfônica da Rádio da Africa do Sul so a direção do maestro Edgar Cree. 19 March.

Programme 1965b. PACT Orchestra. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Eberhard Künkel (conductor). Piet van der Walt Theater. 9 April.

Programme 1965c. SABC First Symphony Season. St. John's Passion. 13 April.

Programme 1965d. PACT: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano). Musaion, Pretoria. 11 June.

Programme 1965e (s.a.-assumed 1965). *The Bartered Bride*, CAPAB. Leonard Schach (producer), David Tidboald (conductor). Alhambra Theatre. s.d.

Programme 1965f (s.a.-assumed 1965). NAPAC: *The Bartered Bride*. Joy Shearer (producer), Charles Denholm (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1965g. Souvenir Programme. Official opening of the University of Port Elizabeth. 9-15 August.

Programme 1965h. Mis in C majeur Op. 86 (Beethoven). Bach Koor Pretoria. Bruno Peyer (dirigent). 30 October.

Programme 1966a. ATKV Kunsconcert. Gé Korsten, Nellie du Toit, Lourens Faul (begeleier). s.d..

Programme 1966b. PACT: *Die Fledermaus*. Peter Brenner (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). PACT Orchestra. Aula, Pretoria. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. May – July.

Programme 1966c. PACT: *Il Trovatore*. Peter Ebert (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). PACT Orchestra. August/September.

Programme 1966d. SABC Second Symphony Season, *A German Requiem*. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gérard Souzay (baritone), Anton Hartman (conductor). 25 October.

Programme 1966e. *The Bartered Bride*. Aula, Pretoria. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. Victor Melleney (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). PACT Orchestra. November/December.

Programme 1966f (s.a. - assumed 1966/1967). Die Vryheidse Musiekvereniging: Nellie du Toit/Gé Korsten, Lourens Faul (accompanist). s.d.

Programme 1966g (s.a. assumed 1966/1967). Vryheid Musical Society. Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten, accompanied by Lourens Faul. s.d.

Programme 1967a. Nellie du Toit (sopraan), Gé Korsten (tenoor), Lourens Faul (klavier). Nasionale Jeugbond van Transvaal, Alberton. 10 March.

Programme 1967b (s.a. - assumed 1967). PACT Orchestra. Neil Chapman (conductor), Nellie du Toit, soloist. Tour: Carolina, Ermelo, Volksrust, Standerton, Bethal, Ventersdorp, Lichtenburg, Zeerust. 13–22 March.

Programme 1967c. Queenstown and District Music Club: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Lionel Bowman (piano). 22 April.

Programme 1967d (s.a. - assumed 1967). Tour Programme: Nellie du Toit/Lionel Bowman.

Programme 1967e (s.a. - assumed 1967). CAPAB: *Carmen*. Jan Bouws jr (producer), Georg Tintner (conductor). June.

Programme 1967f. PACT: *Madame Butterfly*. Aula, Pretoria. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. August/September. Civic Theatre, Klerksdorp. October.

Programme 1967g. Nellie du Toit/Gé Korsten. Hedwig Lombard (begeleiding). Aangebied deur Tot-nut-en genotkomitee, Alkmaar N. G. Gemeente. 1 December.

Programme 1968a. PACT: *Die Fledermaus*. Xander Haagen (producer), Neil Chapman (conductor). PACT Orchestra. s.d.

Programme 1968b. PACT: *Madame Butterfly*. Victor Melleney (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). April/May.

Programme 1968c (s.a. - assumed 1968). CAPAB: *Martha*. Jan Bouws jr (producer), Derek Hudson (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1968d. CAPAB: *Carmen*. Jan Bouws jr (producer), Derek Hudson (conductor). 13 June.

Programme 1968e. Nellie du Toit/Hennie Joubert. 5 July.

Programme 1968f. University of South Africa. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano). s.d.

Programme 1968g. Symphony Concert. Herbert Menges (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano). 17 August.

Programme 1968h. Onthullingskonsert: Genl. J. B. M. Hertzog-monument. SAUK Simfonie-orke. Anton Hartman (dirigent). Stadsaal, Bloemfontein. 19 September.

Programme 1968i. PACT Orchestra. Leo Quayle (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gé Korsten (tenor). Civic Theatre, Klerksdorp. 9 November.

Programme 1968j. Popular Concert: "Night of love". Gé Korsten, Nellie du Toit. Nigel Brandweer Ontspanningsklub. 28 November.

Programme 1969a. CAPAB: *La Bohème*. Gregorio Fiasconaro (producer), David Tidboald (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1969b. The Port Elizabeth Gilbert & Sullivan Society: *The Student Prince*. 22 September - 4 October.

Programme 1969c. Town Council Brakpan: Golden Jubilee 1919-1969. Johannesburg Promenade Orchestra. Solly Aronowsky (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1969d. The Gé Korsten Show. Salisbury, Bulawayo. 8, 9, 14, 15 November.

Programme 1969e. SABC: Music for Millions. Gé Korsten, Nellie du Toit, SABC Orchestra. Jos Cleber (conductor). Pretoria, Germiston, Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, Roodepoort, Springs. 26 November - 6 December.

Programme 1969f (s.a. - assumed 1969). A Gala Concert in aid of the Nellie du Toit Bursary. Durban Music Society. s.d.

Programme 1969g (s.a. - assumed 1969). CAPAB: Nellie du Toit, Laura Searle.

Programme 1969h (s.a. - assumed 1969). Popular Concert: Nellie du Toit/Gé Korse, Albie Louw trio. Graaff-Reinett, Cradock, Queenstown, Grahamstown, East London, Umtata. April 26 - May 1.

Programme 1969i (s.a. - assumed 1969/70). Popular Concert: Nellie du Toit/Gé Korsten with the Albie Louw Trio. s.d.

Programme 1969j (s.a. - assumed 1960's). PACT Orchestra. Leo Quayle (conductor), Nellie du Toit/Gé Korsten. s.d.

Programme 1970a. Symphony Concert: SABC Orchestra. Edgar Cree (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Bob Borowsky (baritone). 6 March.

Programme 1970b. Gé Korsten, Nellie du Toit, begelei deur Susan Steenkamp. Windhoek. 18, 20, 22 April.

Programme 1970c. The Second Worldwide Madame Butterfly Competition. Osaka, Tokyo, Nagasaki, Japan. May/June.

Programme 1970d. *The Desert Song*. The Port Elizabeth Gilbert and Sullivan Society and the Theatre Guild. September.

Programme 1970e. *The Desert Song*. Collegiate Junior School Gala Performance. 12 September.

Programme 1970f. ATKV Kempton Park-tak: Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. 21 November.

Programme 1970g. *Messiah*. Durban Symphony Orchestra. Charles Denholm (conductor). 3 December.

Programme 1970h. PACOFS: Overvaal Ensemble. s.d.

Programme 1971a. PACT Orchestra. First Symphony Season 1971: Nellie du Toit. 11, 12 February.

Programme 1971b. PACT: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Russell Channell (piano). Musaion, Pretoria. 17 February.

Programme 1971c. PACT: *La Traviata*. Neels Hansen (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). Aula, Pretoria. 20, 24, 26, 29 March. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 2, 5, 7, 10, 14 April.

Programme 1971d (s.a. - assumed 1971). CAPAB: *Die Towerfluit*. Frederick Dalberg (producer), Karl Fischer (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1971e. Celebrity Concerts, National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC. Lorin Maazel (conductor). City Hall, Johannesburg. 23 July.

Programme 1971f. SABC: Popular Concert. National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC. Edgar Cree (conductor). Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. 6 August.

Programme 1971g. Light Concert. Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. Sasolburg. 28 August.

Programme 1971h. NAPAC: *Lucia di Lammermoor*. James Conrad (producer), Bryan Balkwill (conductor). Pietermaritzburg and Durban. 3, 5 October.

Programme 1971i (s.a. - assumed 1971). NAPAC: *La Bohème*. James Conrad (producer), Edgar Cree (conductor). Alhambra Theatre, Durban. s.d.

Programme 1971j. Suidkus Afrikaanse Sakekamer: Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten, Albie Louw Trio. Natal. 1 November.

Programme 1972a. CAPAB: *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Gregorio Fiasconaro (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1972b. PACT Orchestra. John Pryce-Jones (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gé Korsten (tenor). Meyerspark Gardens. 15, 16 February.

Programme 1972c. PACOFS: *Norma*. James Conrad (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). Bloemfontein. March.

Programme 1972d. CAPAB: *Madama Butterfly*. Gregorio Fiasconaro (producer), David Tidboald (conductor). Nico Malan Opera House, Cape Town. 27 May.

Programme 1972e. PACT: *Don Giovanni*. Aula, Pretoria. 5, 7, 9, 11, 19 August. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 5, 7, 9, 11, 19 August.

Programme 1972f (s.a.- assumed 1972). *Die Messias*. Derek Ochse (conductor), Jubilate Choir. Members of the PACT symphony orchestra. Rustenburg. November 18.

Programme 1973a. CAPAB: *Midnight Matinée*. 1 January.

Programme 1973b. *The Student Prince*. Reps Theatre, Salisbury. 19 January – 3 February.

Programme 1973c. PACOFS: *Lucia di Lammermoor*. James Conrad (producer), Bryan Balkwill (conductor). Durban Symphony Orchestra. March. s.d.

Programme 1973d (s.a. - assumed 1973). NAPAC: *Madama Butterfly*. Angelo Gobbato (producer), Bryan Balkwill (conductor). Durban Symphony Orchestra.

Programme 1973e. Nellie du Toit Bursary Concert. UNISA Auditorium, Pretoria. 18 June.

Programme 1973f. PACT: *Die Huwelik van Figaro*. Peter Ebert (regisseur), Leo Quayle (dirigent). Pretoria. 26, 28, 30 July, 1, 3 August. Johannesburg. 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 August.

Programme 1973g. Third Symphony Season. Excerpts: *Julius Caesar* National Symphony Orchestra of the SABC. Jussi Jalas (conductor). Nellie du Toit (soprano), Bruce Martin (bass). City Hall, Johannesburg. 6, 7 November.

Programme 1973h. Nellie du Toit, Rikie Venter (sopranos), Marietjie Joubert (piano). 30 November.

Programme 1973i (s.a. - assumed 1973). NAPAC: Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten, Eduan Grobbelaar (piano). s.d.

Programme 1974a. PACT: *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Neels Hansen (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 19, 23, 25, 27, 29 March. Aula, Pretoria. 4, 6, 8, 10, 13 April.

Programme 1974b. NAPAC: *Andrea Chénier*. James Conrad (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). 18 May.

Programme 1974c. PACT: *Norma*. Aula, Pretoria. 2, 6, 8, 10 August. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 16, 19, 21, 23, 27, 29, 31 August.

Programme 1974d. PACT and SWAPAC: Nellie Du Toit with accompanists Hennie Joubert and Hubert du Plessis (only Pretoria). Musaion, Pretoria. 16 October. Windhoek. November 21. Gobabis. 23 November.

Programme 1974e. CAPAB: *Die Fledermaus*. Angelo Gobbato (producer), David Tidboald (conductor). December 1974/ January 1975.

Programme 1974f (s.a. - assumed 1974). Nellie du Toit, Sarita Stern, Gé Korsten, Lawrence Folley. Durban Symphony Orchestra. Werner Andreas Albert (conductor). s.d.

Programme 1975a. PACOFS: *Tosca*. Conrad Haikes (producer) Bryan Balkwill (conductor). Civic Theatre, Bloemfontein. 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 15 March. Ernest Oppenheimer Theatre, Welkom. 18, 20, 22 March.

Programme 1975b. NAPAC: *Turandot*. Enayat Rezai (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). 7 May.

Programme 1975c. *Symphony No. 9* (Beethoven). Leo Quayle (conductor), Nellie du Toit (soprano), Gé Korsten (tenor), Stella Beder (contralto), Rudi Neitz (bass). City Hall, Pretoria. 6, 7 June. Colosseum, Johannesburg. 8 June.

Programme 1975d. *Die Huwelik van Figaro*. Peter Ebert (producer), Leo Quayle (Conductor). Aula, Pretoria. 16 July.

Programme 1975e. NAPAC: *Il Trovatore*. James Conrad (producer), John Pryce-Jones (conductor). Alhambra Theatre, Durban. 7 October.

Programme 1975f. PACOFS/NAPAC: *Il Trovatore*. James Conrad (producer), John Pryce Jones (conductor). Etienne Rousseau Theatre, Sasolburg. 24 October.

Programme 1976a. PACT: *La Bohème*. Neels Hansen (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). Aula, Pretoria. 12, 16, 18, 20 March. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 25, 27, 30 April.

Programme 1976b. Song Recital: Nellie du Toit. Dalene Steenkamp, piano. Oude Pastorie Museum, Paarl. Paarl Girls' High School Centenary. 13 April.

Programme 1976c. NAPAC: *Madama Butterfly*. Enayat Rezai (producer), John Pryce-Jones (conductor). 6 May.

Programme 1976d. PACT: *Jenufa*. Ande Anderson (producer), Leo Quayle (conductor). Aula, Pretoria. 22, 24 August. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 30 July, 2, 5, 7, 12, 14 August. Schools' performances: 14, 20 July and 3 August.

Programme 1976e. CAPAB: An evening with Gé Korsten and Nellie du Toit. Pianist: Hennie Joubert. August.

Programme 1976f. Salisbury Arts Council: Recital by Nellie du Toit and Hennie Joubert. Courtauld Hall. 8 September.

Programme 1976g. NAPAC: *Faust*. James Conrad (producer), John Pryce Jones (conductor). 9 October.

Programme 1977a. CAPAB: *La Traviata*. Gregorio Fiasconaro (producer), David Tidboald (conductor). January.

Programme 1977b. Celebrity Recitals: Nellie du Toit, Gé Korsten. Durban. 18 September.

Programme 1978a. PACT: *Die Fledermaus*. Neels Hansen (producer), Terence Kern (conductor). Aula, Pretoria. 18. 22 March. Civic Theatre, Johannesburg. 31 March, 4, 8, 10, 12, 14 April. Schools' performances: 20 March, 6 April.

Programme 1978b. *The Desert Song*. Rainbow 7 Arts Theatres, Salisbury & Bulawayo. June/July.

Programme 1978c. Ateljeekonsert: Nellie du Toit, Hennie Joubert. Televisiesentrum, Ateljee 6. Johannesburg. 13 September.

Programme 1978d. ACVV. Nellie du Toit (sopraan) en Danie Louw (klavier). Labori Herehuis. Paarl. 13 November.

Programme 1979a. Gala Concert: Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano), Rudi Neitz (baritone), Wim Willemstijn (piano). Brakpan Jeugkoor en Mannekoor. Brakpan. 18 May.

Programme 1979b. NAPAC: *La Traviata*. James Conrad (producer), Franco Ferraris (conductor). 13 July.

Programme 1979c. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Hennie Joubert (piano). Civic Theatre, Bloemfontein. 16 November.

Programme 1980a. *Vier letzte Lieder* (Strauss). CAPAB Orchestra. David Tidboald (conductor). Nellie du Toit (soprano). Endler Hall, Stellenbosch. 13 May.

Programme 1980b. Konservatorium Dameskoor o.l.v. Acáma Fick. Solis: Nellie du Toit. s.d.

Programme 1981a. Sondagaanduitvoering: Nellie du Toit, Hubert du Plessis. Stellenbosch. 15 March.

Programme 1981b (s.a. – assumed 1981). “Wynland Herfskonsert”. Nellie du Toit (sopraan), Danie Louw (klavier). KWV Katedraal Kelders, Paarl. s.d.

Programme 1981c. Vokale Musiek van Stellenbosse Komponiste. Komitee vir Eietydse Musiek. Endler Hall, Stellenbosch. 11 October.

Programme. 1982a. Liederaand: Nellie du Toit (sopraan), Acáma Fick (klavier). Oude Pastorie Museum, Paarl. 23 April.

Programme 1982b. *Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad* Op. 29 (Hubert du Plessis). Nellie du Toit. KRUIK -orkes, Universiteitskoor van Stellenbosch. Christopher Dowdeswell (dirigent). Endler-saal, Stellenbosch. 11 August.

Programme 1983. Hans Endler Memorial Fund Concert. Endler Hall, Stellenbosch. 23 April.

Programme 1985a. Nederburg. Recital. Nellie du Toit (soprano), Bernhard de Clerk (baritone), Albie van Schalkwyk (piano). Nederburg, Paarl. 19 May.

Programme 1985b. Uitvoering ter ere van Prof. Richard Behrens. Endler-saal, Stellenbosch. 11 August.

Programme. 1985c. Universiteitskoor van Stellenbosch o.l.v. Acáma Fick. Endler-saal, Stellenbosch. 7 September.

Programme 1986a. CAPAB: *Der Rosenkavalier*. Murray Dickie (producer), Karl-Heinz Dold (conductor). 23 August - 10 September.

Programme 1986b. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns. Bekronings 1986. s.d.

Programme 1988. SWAPAC: *Madama Butterfly*. Windhoek Theatre. December.

Programme. 1990. Third UNISA International Singing Competition. Pretoria. January 1990.

Programme 1992. First South African National Congress for Voice Teachers. Stellenbosch. July.

Programme 2002a. “An die Muzik”[sic]: *Brahms Liebeslieder-Walzer*. Somerset West Library Hall. 24 March.

Programme 2002b. Musiq 2002. ’n Klassiekemusiekkompetisie vir jong volwasse musici. ATKV. Endler-saal, Stellenbosch. 4-7 September.

#### **ARTICLES FROM NEWSPAPERS**

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- . 1976. Nellie saves Boheme *Pretoria News*. 15 March.
- Baneshik, Percy. 1972. New highlight in opera season. *The Star*. 30 May.
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- . 1954b. Combined Recital in Durban. *The Natal Mercury*. 19 July.
- . 1955a. Expressive rendering of Wagner. *The Natal Mercury*. 25 March.
- . 1955b. Soprano gets double recall. *The Natal Mercury*. 28 March.
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- Benzon, John. 1977. Van Heerden dominates opera in fine Verdi production. *The Cape Times*. 16 May.
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Du Plessis, Phil. 1982. Feestlike liedere-aand. *Rapport*. 20 June.

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*APPENDIX I*

**OPERAS PRESENTED BY OPERA ASSOCIATIONS IN THE TRANSVAAL: 1956–1963**

Operas in which Du Toit participated are printed in bold, and her role, the producer and the conductor are indicated.

YEAR	NATIONAL OPERA ASSOCIATION	OPERA ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (OPSA)	SOUTH AFRICAN OPERA FEDERATION	PRETORIA OPERA GROUP
1956	-	-	-	<i>Carmen</i> (concert version)
1957	<i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Cio-Cio-San) (Rota/Schulman) (Johannesburg) <i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Cio-Cio-San) (Rota/Schuurman) (Durban)	-	-	<i>I pagliacci</i>
1958	-	Presented operas in collaboration with the South African Opera Federation since 1958	<i>La traviata</i> (Engl.) <i>Die Fledermaus</i> (Afr.) <b><i>In the drought (In die droogte)</i></b> (Afr.) (Elsie) (Dommissie/Cree) <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> (Engl.)	<i>Die nuwe Dominee</i>
1959	-	-	<b><i>La bohème</i></b> (Afr.) (Mimi) (Dommissie/Quayle) <i>The Telephone</i> <i>Amelia goes to the Ball</i>	-
1960	-	-	<b><i>Die Zauberflöte (Die Towerfluit)</i></b> (Afr.) (Pamina) (Dommissie/Quayle) <i>Rigoletto</i>	<b><i>Madama Butterfly</i></b> (Engl.) (Cio-Cio-San) (Dommissie/Hartman) <i>Lilac Time</i>
1961	-	-	<i>La traviata</i> <i>Don Pasquale</i>	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>
1962	<i>The Barber of Seville</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i>	-	<i>Die verhale van Hoffmann</i> <i>Un ballo in maschera</i> <i>Hänsel und Gretel</i> (Engl.)	<i>Carmen</i>
1963	-	-	-	<b><i>Der Wildschütz (Die Wilddief)</i></b> (Afr.) (Baronin Freimann) (Gruber/Gruber)

Of the twenty-six operas presented, Nellie du Toit sang in seven opera seasons.

Source: Malan (ed.) 1984. *Operaverenigings in die Transvaal (Voor TRUK)* in: *SAME*. 1984: 351-353.

*APPENDIX II*

**OPERAS PRESENTED BY THE ARTS COUNCILS: 1963–1979<sup>i</sup>**

**Operas in which Du Toit participated are printed in bold, and her role, the producer and the conductor are indicated.**

**Operas not sung by Du Toit are stated in the language of performance.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PACT</b>	<b>CAPAB</b>	<b>NAPAC</b>	<b>PACOFS</b>
<b>1963</b>	<i>Tosca</i> <b><i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> (Afr.)</b> <b>(Contessa) (Witt/Hartman)</b> <i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i> <i>Susanna's secret</i>	-	-	-
<b>1964</b>	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> <i>Faust</i> <b><i>Il trovatore</i></b> <b>(Leonora) (Ebert/Quayle)</b>	-	<i>Madama Butterfly</i> <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> <i>The Merry Widow</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i> <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i>	<i>Die Fledermaus</i> <i>Otello</i>
<b>1965</b>	<i>Nabucco</i> <i>La bohème</i>	<b><i>Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)</i> (Engl.) (Mařenka)</b> <b>(Schach/Tidboald)</b> <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> <i>Così fan tutte</i> * <i>Opera for all</i> *	<i>Otello</i> <i>Cavalleria rusticana</i> <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> <b><i>Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)</i></b> <b>(Engl.) (Mařenka)</b> <b>(Shearer/Denholm)</b> <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> <i>Nabucco</i> <i>Aida</i>	<i>Der Vogelhändler</i>
<b>1966</b>	<i>Nabucco</i> <b><i>Die Fledermaus</i> (Afr.) (Rosalinde)</b> <b>(Brenner/Quayle)</b> <b><i>Il trovatore</i> (Leonora)</b> <b>(Ebert/Quayle)</b> <i>Così fan tutte</i> <b><i>Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)</i> (Engl.) (Mařenka)</b> <b>(Melleney/Quayle)</b>	<i>Eugene Onegin</i> <i>Il matrimonio segreto</i> <i>Così fan tutte</i> * <i>Opera for all</i> *	<i>The Gypsy Baron</i> <i>La serva padrona</i> <i>The Medium</i> <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>	<i>The Beggar's Opera</i> <i>The Gypsy Baron</i> <i>Così fan tutte</i>



YEAR	PACT	CAPAB	NAPAC	PACOFS
1967	<i>Macbeth</i> <i>The Bartered Bride</i> <b>Madama Butterfly (Engl.)</b> <b>(Cio-Cio-San) (Melleney/Hartman)</b> <i>Il seraglio</i>	<i>Manon Lescaut</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <b>Carmen (Micaëla)</b> <b>(Bouws jr/Tintner)</b> <i>Rita*</i> <i>The Old Maid and the Thief*</i> <i>Opera for all*</i>	<i>Chanticleer</i> (high schools) <i>The Magic Flute</i> <i>La traviata</i> <i>The Dream of Gerontius</i>	<i>The Barber of Seville</i>
1968	<i>Macbeth</i> <b>Die Fledermaus (Afr.) (Rosalinde)</b> <b>(Haagen/Chapman)<sup>ii</sup></b> <b>Madama Butterfly (Engl.)</b> <b>(Cio-Cio-San) (Melleney/Quayle)</b> <i>La traviata</i> <i>Nabucco</i>	<i>Turandot</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <i>Tosca</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <b>Martha (Lady Harriet Durham)</b> <b>(Bouws jr/Hudson)</b> <b>Carmen (Micaëla)</b> <b>(Bouws jr/Hudson)</b> <i>Opera for all*</i>	<i>The Magic Flute</i> <i>Tosca</i> (NAPAC/UCT) <i>The Consul</i> <i>The Cooper(schools)</i>	<i>Der Bettelstudent</i>
1969	<i>Peter Grimes</i> <i>La traviata</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i> <i>Don Carlos</i>	<b>Lucia di Lammermoor (Lucia)</b> <b>(Fiasconaro/Ferraris)</b> <b>La bohème (Musetta)</b> (CAPAB/UCT) <b>(Fiasconaro/Tidboald)</b> <i>Die Fledermaus</i> <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <i>Opera for all*</i>	<i>Norma</i> (concert version) <i>La traviata</i> <i>Il seraglio</i> <i>The Barber of Seville</i>	<i>Il trovatore</i> (concert version) <i>Carmen</i> (concert version) <i>Tosca</i> (concert version) <i>Madama Butterfly</i> (concert version) <i>Tosca</i>
1970	<i>Tosca</i> <i>Gianni Schicchi</i> <i>Il tabarro</i> <i>Don Pasquale</i> <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>	<i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> <i>Fidelio</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <i>Un ballo in maschera</i> <i>Falstaff</i> (CAPAB/UCT) <i>Tosca</i> (CAPAB/UCT)	<i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> (concert version) <i>Norma</i> <i>Fidelio</i> <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> <i>The Barber of Seville</i>	<i>Dr Mirakel</i> <i>Carmen</i>
1971	<b>La traviata (Engl.)(Violetta)</b> <b>(Hansen/Ferraris)</b> <i>La forza del destino</i> <i>Rigoletto</i> <i>Tosca</i>	<i>Aida</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i> <b>Die Zauberflöte (Afr.)</b> <b>(Königin der Nacht)</b> <b>(Dalberg/Fischer)</b>	<b>Lucia di Lammermoor (Lucia)</b> <b>(Conrad/Balkwill)</b> <b>La bohème (Mimi)</b> <b>(Conrad/Cree)</b> <i>Die Fledermaus</i> <i>Così fan tutte</i>	<i>Dr Mirakel</i> <i>Il seraglio</i> <i>La bohème</i> <i>Susanna's Secret</i>

YEAR	PACT	CAPAB	NAPAC	PACOFS
1972	<i>Carmen</i> <i>Don Pasquale</i> <i>Rigoletto</i> <b>Don Giovanni (Engl.)</b> <b>(Donna Anna)</b> <b>(Schach/Quayle)</b>	<i>Don Giovanni</i> <b>Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San)</b> <b>(Fiasconaro/Tidboald)</b> <i>The White Horse Inn</i> <i>Die Fledermaus</i> <i>The Tales of Hoffmann</i> <i>Don Pasquale</i>	<i>Carmen</i> <i>Cavalleria rusticana/I pagliacci</i> <i>Susanna's Secret</i>	<i>Susanna's Secret</i> <b>Norma (Norma)</b> <b>(Conrad/Ferraris)</b> <i>La bohème</i>
1973	<i>La traviata</i> <i>Aida</i> <i>Carmen</i> <b>Le nozze di Figaro (Afr.) (Contessa)</b> <b>(Ebert/Quayle)</b>	<i>Aida</i> <i>The Merry Widow</i> <i>La traviata</i> <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> <i>Bluebeard's Castle/Gianni Schicchi</i> <i>Rigoletto</i> <i>Cinderella (La cenerentola)</i>	<b>Lucia di Lammermoor ( Lucia)</b> <b>(Conrad/Balkwill)</b> <b>Madama Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San)</b> <b>(Gobbato/Balkwill)</b> <i>Rita (Lunch Hour)(schools)</i> <i>Tosca</i> <i>La bohème</i>	<b>Lucia di Lammermoor (Lucia)</b> <b>(Conrad/Balkwill)</b> <i>Madama Butterfly</i>
1974	<i>Rigoletto</i> <b>Lucia di Lammermoor (Lucia)</b> <b>(Hansen/Quayle)</b> <b>Norma (Norma)</b> <b>(Yannopoulos/Quayle)</b> <i>La bohème</i>	<i>Carmen</i> <i>La bohème</i> <i>La traviata</i> <i>Così fan tutte</i> <i>Turandot</i> <i>Hansie en Grietjie</i> <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> <b>Die Fledermaus (Afr.) (Rosalinde)</b> <b>Gobbato/Tidboald<sup>iii</sup></b>	<b>Andrea Chénier (Madeleine)</b> <b>Conrad/Ferraris)</b> <b>Carmen (Micaëla)</b> <b>(Conrad/Pryce-Jones)</b> <i>Figaro (schools)</i> <i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i> <i>Die Fledermaus</i>	<i>Rigoletto</i> <i>Norma</i>
1975	<i>Don Carlos</i> <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> <i>Die Fledermaus</i> <b>Le nozze di Figaro (Afr.) (Contessa)</b> <b>(Ebert/Quayle)</b>	<b>Die Fledermaus (Afr.) (Rosalinde)</b> <b>(Gobbato/Tidboald)</b> <i>Susanna's Secret</i> <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> <i>Un ballo in maschera</i> <i>La bohème</i> <i>Don Carlos</i> <i>L'elisir d'amore</i> <i>La Perichole</i>	<b>Andrea Chénier (Madeleine)</b> <b>(Conrad/Ferraris)</b> <b>Turandot (Liù)</b> <b>(Rezai/Ferraris)</b> <b>Il trovatore (Leonora)</b> <b>(Conrad/Pryce-Jones)</b>	<b>Tosca (Tosca)</b> <b>(Haikes/Balkwill)</b> <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> <i>Ontvoering uit die Harem</i> <i>Prima la musica e poi le parole</i> <b>Il trovatore (Leonora)</b> <b>(Conrad/Pryce-Jones)</b> <i>(Sasolburg)</i>

YEAR	PACT	CAPAB	NAPAC	PACOFS
1976	<i>La forza del destino</i> <b><i>La bohème</i> (Engl.) (Mimi)</b> <b>(Hansen/Quayle)</b> <b><i>Jenůfa</i> (Engl.) (Jenůfa)</b> <b>(Anderson/Quayle)</b> <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>	<i>Hansie en Grietjie</i> <i>Rigoletto</i> <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i> <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> <i>Tosca</i> <i>Norma</i> <i>Carmen</i> <i>La traviata</i>	<b><i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Cio-Cio-San)</b> <b>(Rezai/Pryce-Jones)</b> <b><i>Faust</i> (Marguerite)</b> <b>(Conrad/Pryce-Jones)</b> <i>Il seraglio</i> <i>Aida</i>	<i>L'elisir d'amore</i> <i>Il trovatore</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i> <i>A Game of Chance</i>
1977	<i>Don Giovanni</i> <i>Faust</i> <i>The Merry Widow</i>	<b><i>La traviata</i> (Violetta)</b> <b>(Fiasconaro/Tidboald)</b> <i>Die Fledermaus</i> <b><i>Otello</i> (Desdemona)</b> <b>Fiasconaro/Tidboald)</b> <i>L'elisir d'amore</i> <i>Falstaff</i> <i>Showboat/Die Fledermaus*</i> <i>La Perichole</i>	<i>Rigoletto</i>	<i>Die Huwelik van Figaro</i>
1978	<b><i>Die Fledermaus</i> (Afr.)</b> <b>(Rosalinde)</b> <b>(Hansen/Kern)</b> <i>Nabucco</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i>	<i>Der Fliegende Holländer</i> <i>Don Carlos</i> <i>Fidelio</i> <i>Showboat/Die Fledermaus*</i> <i>Die Towerfluit</i> <i>Madama Butterfly*</i> <i>Cavalleria rusticana/Gianni Schicchi</i>	<i>Nabucco</i> <i>Don Pasquale*</i> <i>Amahl and the Night visitors</i> <i>(lunch hour)</i>	<i>Turandot</i> <i>Hansie en Grietjie</i> <i>Madama Butterfly</i>
1979	<i>Simon boccanegra</i> <i>The Merry Widow</i> <i>Jenůfa</i> <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	<i>The Merry Widow</i> <i>Eugene Onegin</i> <i>Tosca</i> <i>La traviata</i> <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> <i>Nabucco</i> <i>Showboat</i> <i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> <i>The Italian Girl in Algiers</i>	<b><i>La traviata</i> (Violetta)</b> <b>(Conrad/Ferraris)</b> <i>The Merry Widow</i>	<i>Die Barbier van Seville</i> <i>Die Sigeunerbaron</i>

YEAR	PACT	CAPAB	NAPAC	PACOFS
1986	-	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> (Marschallin) (Dickie/Dold)	-	-

\* CAPAB and one NAPAC touring productions

**Sources:**

*Performing Arts in South Africa; Cultural aspirations of a young country.* Issued by the Department of Information, Pretoria, 1969

**PACT Details:** *Dekade/Decade: 'n Oorsig in beeld/A pictorial view: TRUK/PACT 1963-1972;* Edited by Ulrich Stark (s.d.)  
*Pact Opera – the First 25 Years. A personal view.* Peskin, Stanley. 1990. Haum. Pretoria

**NAPAC Details:** Dr Rosalie Conrad. 2001. Dates of opening nights of NAPAC operas.

**PACOFS Details:** Hettie Beukes. 2001. [Beukes@hum.uovs.ac.za](mailto:Beukes@hum.uovs.ac.za)

**CAPAB Details:** Prof. Angelo Gobbato. 2002. *CAPAB Opera Productions ex Brochures. The First ten Years CAPAB-KRUIK Die Eerste tien Jaar.* Mike Cloete (ed.) (s.d.)  
*CAPAB/KRUIK – OPERA 1965-1969.* Brochure compiled by Louis Steyn (s.d.)

**Number of seasons Nellie du Toit sang for the Provincial Arts Councils 1963-1979:**

**PACT:** 17 seasons

**CAPAB:** 11 seasons (plus one season in 1986)

**NAPAC:** 13 seasons

**PACOFS:** 4 seasons

**TOTAL:** 45 seasons (plus one season in 1986)

**GRAND TOTAL OF OPERA SEASONS SUNG FOR THE ARTS COUNCILS: 46**

<sup>i</sup> Since Du Toit's opera career virtually ended in 1979, the operas presented by the Provincial Arts Councils until 1986, when Du Toit made a once-off return to opera, are not mentioned here.

<sup>ii</sup> This opera is not mentioned in Peskin, probably because it was taken on tour.

<sup>iii</sup> *Die Fledermaus* presented in the summer season 1974/1975 opened on 31 December 1974 and is counted as one season.

### APPENDIX III

#### NELLIE DU TOIT – REPERTOIRE – EXCLUDING LIEDER AND LIGHT MUSIC

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##### REPERTOIRE OF OPERA ROLES SUNG IN STUDENT PERFORMANCES 1950–1953

Berlioz	<i>Beatrice et Benedict</i>	Hero
Menotti	<i>The Telephone</i>	Lucy
Menotti	<i>The Medium</i>	Monica
Pergolesi	<i>La serva padrona</i>	Serpina
Puccini	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	Lauretta
Puccini	<i>Suor Angelica</i>	Suor Angelica
Purcell	<i>Dido and Aeneas</i>	Dido
Wolf-Ferrari	<i>Il segreto di Susanna (Susanna's Secret)</i>	Susanna
Leoncavallo	<i>I pagliacci</i> (sung in a radio broadcast)	Nedda

(Total: 9 roles)

##### REPERTOIRE OF OPERA ROLES SUNG ON TOUR IN GREAT BRITAIN 1953/1954

Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte</i>	Fiordiligi
Mozart	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Susanna
Rossini	<i>La cenerentola</i>	Clorinde

(Total: 3 roles)

##### REPERTOIRE OF OPERA ROLES SUNG IN SOUTH AFRICA 1957–1986

Badings	<i>Asterion</i>	Prinses
Bellini	<i>Norma</i>	Norma
Bizet	<i>Carmen</i>	Micaëla
Donizetti	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia
Flotow	<i>Martha</i>	Lady Harriet Durham
Giordano	<i>Andrea Chénier</i>	Madeleine
Gounod	<i>Faust</i>	Marguerite
Janáček	<i>Jenůfa</i>	Jenůfa
Joubert	<i>In the drought</i>	Elsie
Lortzing	<i>Der Wildschütz</i>	Baronin Freimann
Mozart	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>	Contessa Almaviva
Mozart	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Donna Anna
Mozart	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Pamina
Mozart	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Königin der Nacht

Puccini	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Cio-Cio-San
Puccini	<i>Turandot</i>	Liù
Puccini	<i>La bohème</i>	Mimi
Puccini	<i>La bohème</i>	Musetta
Puccini	<i>Tosca</i>	Tosca
Smetana	<i>Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)</i>	Mařenka
Strauss	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Marschallin
Verdi	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Leonora
Verdi	<i>La traviata</i>	Violetta
Verdi	<i>Otello</i>	Desdemona

(Total: 24 roles)

#### **REPERTOIRE OF OPERA ROLES SUNG IN CONCERT VERSION (EXCERPTS)**

Handel	<i>Giulio Cesare</i>	Cleopatra
Strauss	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>	Octavian
Weber	<i>Der Freischütz</i>	Agathe

(Total: 3 roles) **(Grand total of opera roles: 40)**

#### **REPERTOIRE OF ROLES SUNG IN OPERETTA AND MUSICALS**

Gilbert and Sullivan	<i>The Desert Song</i>	Margot
Romberg	<i>The Student Prince</i>	Kathy
Strauss	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Rosalinde

(Total: 3 roles)

#### **REPERTOIRE OF ORATORIO AND RELATED GENRES**

Bach	<i>Johannes-Passion</i>
Badings	<i>Ballade van die Bloeddorstige Jagter</i>
Beethoven	<i>Mass in C major</i>
Brahms	<i>Ein Deutsches Requiem</i>
Handel	<i>Messiah</i>
Handel	<i>Ode for St. Cecilia's Day</i>
Handel	<i>Judas Maccabaeus</i>
Haydn	<i>Die Schöpfung</i>
Mozart	<i>Exsultate jubilate</i>
Verdi	<i>Messa da Requiem</i>

## CONCERT REPERTOIRE

Britten	<i>Les illuminations</i>
Beethoven	<i>Symphony No. 9</i>
Du Plessis	<i>Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad</i>
Mahler	<i>Symphony No. 4</i>
Strauss	<i>Vier letzte Lieder</i>
Villa-Lobos	<i>Bachianas Brasileiras</i>

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## LIST OF COMPOSERS OF LIED/ART SONG REPERTOIRE

Beethoven, Ludwig van	Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus
Brahms, Johannes	Mahler, Gustav
Brent-Wessels, Judith	Purcell, Henry
Cornelius, Peter	Poulenc, Francis
Dvořák, Antonin	Quilter, Roger
Dargomyzhky, Alexander	Rachmaninov, Sergei
Duparc, Henri	Reger, Max
De Villiers, Pieter	Rossini, Gioacchino
Fauré, Gabriel	Schubert, Franz
Gerstman, Blanche	Scarlatti, Alessandro
Guridi, Jesus	Schumann, Robert
Glinka, Michael	Strauss, Richard
Gluck, Christoph Willibald	Tchaikovsky, Peter
Hahn, Reynaldo	Van Rennes, Catherine
Haydn, Joseph	Van Wyk, Arnold
Kirby, Percival	Verdi, Giuseppe
Lancen, Serge	Wolf, Hugo
Lemmer, Petrus	Wolf-Ferrari, Ermanno
Löwenherz, Ernst	Wegelin, Arthur
Marais, S. le Roux	Zeller, Carl

List of Composers: Source: Du Toit (2002c)

## OTHER REPERTOIRE:

Arie antiche, Handel arias, Mozart concert arias; Various opera and operetta arias and duets (see pp.161-162); Light music repertoire (see records in Appendix VIII.)

## *APPENDIX IV*

### NUMBER OF SEASONS PER ROLE SUNG BY NELLIE DU TOIT: 1957–1986

stating composer, opera, role and number of seasons.

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#### **Bellini**

##### *Norma* – Norma (2)

- 1972 Conrad/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – PACOFS  
1974 Yannopoulos/Quayle (sung in Italian) – PACT

#### **Bizet**

##### *Carmen* – Micaëla (3)

- 1967 Bouws jr/Tintner (sung in French) – CAPAB  
1968 Bouws jr/Tintner (sung in French) – CAPAB  
1974 Conrad/Ferraris (sung in French) – NAPAC

#### **Donizetti**

##### *Lucia di Lammermoor* – Lucia (5)

- 1969 Fiasconaro/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – CAPAB  
1971 Conrad/Balkwill (sung in Italian) – NAPAC  
1973 Conrad/Balkwill (sung in Italian) – NAPAC  
1973 Conrad/Balkwill (sung in Italian) – PACOFS  
1974 Hansen/Quayle (sung in Italian) – PACT

#### **Flotow**

##### *Martha* – Lady Harriet Durham (1)

- 1968 Bouws jr/Hudson (sung in English) – CAPAB

#### **Giordano**

##### *Andrea Chénier* – Madeleine (2)

- 1974 Conrad/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – NAPAC  
1975 Conrad/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

#### **Gounod**

##### *Faust* – Marguerite (1)

- 1976 Conrad/Pryce-Jones (sung in French) – NAPAC

#### **Janáček**

##### *Jenůfa* – Jenůfa (1)

- 1976 Anderson/Quayle (sung in English) – PACT



## **Joubert**

### ***In the drought* – Elsie (1)**

1958 Dommissie/Cree (sung in Afrikaans) – South African Opera Federation

## **Lortzing**

### ***Der Wildschütz* – Baronin Freimann (1)**

1963 Gruber/Gruber (sung in Afrikaans) – Pretoria Opera Group

## **Mozart**

### ***Le nozze di Figaro* – Contessa Almaviva (3)**

1963 Witt/Hartman (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

1973 Ebert/Quayle (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

1975 Ebert/Quayle (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

### ***Die Zauberflöte* – Pamina (1)**

1960 Dommissie/Quayle (sung in Afrikaans) – South African Opera Federation

### ***Die Zauberflöte* – Königin der Nacht (1)**

1971 Dalberg/Fischer (sung in Afrikaans) – CAPAB

### ***Don Giovanni* – Donna Anna (1)**

1972 Schach/Quayle (sung in English) – PACT

## **Puccini**

### ***Madama Butterfly* – Cio-Cio-San (8)**

1957 Rota/Schulman (sung in Italian) – South African Opera Federation  
(Johannesburg)

1957 Rota/Schuurman – South African Opera Federation (Durban)

1960 Dommissie/Hartman (sung in English) – Pretoria Opera Group (Pretoria)

1967 Melleney/Hartman (sung in English) – PACT

1968 Melleney/Quayle (sung in English) – PACT

1972 Fiasconaro/Tidboald (sung in Italian) – CAPAB

1973 Gobbato/Balkwill (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

1976 Rezai/Pryce-Jones (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

### ***La bohème* – Mimì (3)**

1958 Dommissie/Hartman (sung in Afrikaans) – South African Opera Federation

1971 Conrad/Cree (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

1976 Hansen/Quayle (sung in English) – PACT

### ***La bohème* – Musetta (1)**

1969 Fiasconaro/Tidboald (sung in Italian) – CAPAB

***Tosca – Tosca (1)***

1975 Haikes/Balkwill (sung in Italian) – PACOFS

***Turandot – Liù (1)***

1975 Rezai/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

**Smetana**

***Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride) – Mařenka (3)***

1965 Schach/Tidboald (sung in English) – CAPAB

1965 Shearer/Denholm (sung in English) – NAPAC

1966 Melleney/Quayle (sung in English) – PACT

**Strauss, J.**

***Die Fledermaus – Rosalinde (4)***

1966 Brenner/Quayle (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

1968 Haagen/Chapman (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

1974 Gobbato/Tidboald (sung in Afrikaans) – CAPAB

1978 Hansen/Kern (sung in Afrikaans) – PACT

**Strauss, R.**

***Der Rosenkavalier – Marschallin (1)***

1986 Dickie/Dold (sung in German) – CAPAB

**Verdi**

***Il trovatore – Leonora (4)***

1964 Ebert/Quayle – (sung in Italian) – PACT

1966 Ebert/Quayle – (sung in Italian) – PACT

1975 Conrad/Pryce-Jones (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

1975 Conrad/Pryce-Jones (sung in Italian) – NAPAC/PACOFS

***La traviata – Violetta (3)***

1971 Hudson/Ferraris (sung in English) – PACT

1977 Fiasconaro/Tidboald (sung in Italian) – CAPAB

1979 Hansen/Ferraris (sung in Italian) – NAPAC

***Otello – Desdemona (1)***

1977 Fiasconaro/Tidboald (sung in Italian) – CAPAB

*APPENDIX V*  
**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF PRODUCERS OF OPERAS  
IN WHICH NELLIE DU TOIT SANG: 1957–1986**  
(roles indicated in brackets)

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**Anderson, Ande**

1976 – *Jenůfa* (Jenůfa) PACT

**Bouws (jr), Jan**

1967 – *Carmen* (Micaëla) CAPAB

1968 – *Martha* (Lady Harriet Durham) CAPAB

1968 – *Carmen* (Micaëla) CAPAB

**Brenner, Peter**

1966 – *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinde) PACT

**Conrad, James**

1971 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) NAPAC

1971 – *La bohème* (Mimi) NAPAC

1972 – *Norma* (Norma) PACOFS

1973 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) PACOFS/NAPAC

1974 – *Andrea Chénier* (Madeleine de Coigny) NAPAC

1974 – *Carmen* (Micaëla) NAPAC

1975 – *Andrea Chénier* (Madeleine de Coigny) NAPAC

1975 – *Il trovatore* (Leonora) NAPAC/PACOFS

1976 – *Faust* (Marguerite) NAPAC

1979 – *La traviata* (Violetta) NAPAC

**Dalberg, Frederick**

1971 – *Die Zauberflöte* (Queen of the Night) CAPAB

**Dickie, Murray**

1986 – *Der Rosenkavalier* (Feldmarschallin Fürstin Werdenberg) CAPAB

**Dommissie, Hermien**

1958 – *In the drought* (Elsie) South African Opera Federation

1959 – *La bohème* (Mimi) South African Opera Federation

1960 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) Pretoria Opera Group

1960 – *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina) South African Opera Federation

**Ebert, Peter**

1964 – *Il trovatore* (Leonora) PACT

1966 – *Il trovatore* (Leonora) PACT

1973 – *Le nozze di Figaro* (Contessa Almaviva) PACT

1975 – *Le nozze di Figaro* (Contessa Almaviva) PACT

**Fiasconaro, Gregorio**

1969 – *La bohème* (Musetta) CAPAB

1969 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) CAPAB

1972 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) CAPAB

1977 – *La traviata* (Violetta) CAPAB

1977 – *Otello* (Desdemona) CAPAB

**Gobbato, Angelo**

1973 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) NAPAC

1974 – *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinde) CAPAB

**Gruber, Georg**

1963 – *Der Wildschütz* (Baronin Freimann) Pretoria Opera Group

**Haagen, Xander**

1968 – *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinde) PACT

**Haikes, Conrad**

1975 – *Tosca* (Floria Tosca) PACOFS

**Hansen, Neels**

1971 – *La traviata* (Violetta) PACT

1974 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia) PACT

1976 – *La bohème* (Mimi) PACT

1978 – *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinde) PACT

**Melleney, Victor**

1966 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* (Mařenka) PACT

1967 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) PACT

1968 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) PACT

**Rezai, Enayat**

1975 – *Turandot* (Liù) NAPAC

1976 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) NAPAC

**Rota, Alessandro**

1957 – *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San) National Opera Association

**Schach, Leonard**

1965 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* (Mařenka) CAPAB

1972 – *Don Giovanni* (Donna Anna) PACT

**Schutte, Jan**

1958 – *Asterion* (Prinses) SABC

**Shearer, Joy**

1965 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* (Mařenka) NAPAC

**Witt, Josef**

1963 – *Le nozze di Figaro* (Contessa Almaviva) PACT

**Yannopoulos, Dino**

1974 – *Norma* (Norma) PACT

*APPENDIX VI*

**ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CONDUCTORS UNDER WHICH NELLIE DU TOIT SANG  
IN OPERA SEASONS: 1957–1986**

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**Balkwill, Bryan**

1971 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* NAPAC

1973 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* PACOFS/NAPAC

1973 – *Madama Butterfly* NAPAC

1975 – *Tosca* PACOFS

**Chapman, Neil**

1968 – *Die Fledermaus* PACT

**Cree, Edgar**

1958 – *In the drought* South African Opera Federation

**Denholm, Charles**

1965 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* NAPAC

**Dold, Karl-Heinz**

1986 – *Der Rosenkavalier* CAPAB

**Ferraris, Franco**

1971 – *La traviata* PACT

1972 – *Norma* PACOFS

1974 – *Andrea Chénier* NAPAC

1975 – *Andrea Chénier* NAPAC

**Fischer, Karl**

1971– *Die Zauberflöte* CAPAB

**Georg Gruber**

1963 – *Der Wildschütz* Pretoria Opera Group

**Hartman, Anton**

1958 – *Asterion* SABC

1960 – *Madama Butterfly* Pretoria Opera Group

1967 – *Madama Butterfly* PACT

**Hudson, Derek**

1968 – *Martha* CAPAB

1968 – *Carmen* CAPAB

**Kern, Terence**

1978 – *Die Fledermaus* PACT

**Pryce-Jones, John**

1974 – *Carmen* NAPAC

1975 – *Il trovatore* NAPAC

1976 – *Madama Butterfly* NAPAC

1976 – *Faust* NAPAC

**Quayle, Leo**

1960 – *Die Zauberflöte* South African Opera Federation

1964 – *Il trovatore* PACT

1966 – *Die Fledermaus* PACT

1966 – *Il trovatore* PACT

1966 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* PACT

1968 – *Madama Butterfly* PACT

1972 – *Don Giovanni* PACT

1973 – *Le nozze di Figaro* PACT

1974 – *Lucia di Lammermoor* PACT

1974 – *Norma* PACT

1975 – *Le nozze di Figaro* PACT

1976 – *La bohème* PACT

1976 – *Jenůfa* NAPAC

**Schulman, Jeremy**

1957 – *Madama Butterfly* National Opera Association

**Schuurman, Frits**

1957 – *Madama Butterfly* National Opera Association

**Tidboald, David**

1965 – *Prodaná nevěsta (The Bartered Bride)* CAPAB

1969 – *La bohème* CAPAB

1972 – *Madama Butterfly* CAPAB

1974 – *Die Fledermaus* CAPAB

1977 – *La traviata* CAPAB

1977 – *Otello* CAPAB

**Tintner, Georg**

1967 – *Carmen* CAPAB



**APPENDIX VII**

**OPERAS IN WHICH NELLIE DU TOIT AND GÉ KORSTEN SANG TOGETHER**

**1959 – 1978**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Opera</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Opera Company</b>	<b>Producer/Conductor</b>
1959	<i>La bohème</i>	Mimi/Rodolfo	South African Opera Federation	Dommissie/Hartman
1960	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Pamina/First Man in Armour	South African Opera Federation	Dommissie/Quayle
1960	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Cio-Cio-San/Pinkerton	Pretoria Opera Group	Dommissie/Hartman
1961	<i>Der Freischütz</i>	Agathe/Max	Concert version	Hartman
1964	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Leonora/Manrico	PACT	Ebert/Quayle
1966	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Leonora/Manrico	PACT	Ebert/Quayle
1967	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Cio-Cio-San/Pinkerton	PACT	Melleney/Hartman
1968	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Cio-Cio-San/Pinkerton	PACT	Melleney/Quayle
1969	<i>La bohème</i>	Musetta/Rodolfo	CAPAB	Fiasconaro/Tidboald
1969	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia/Edgardo	CAPAB	Fiasconaro/Hudson
1971	<i>La traviata</i>	Violetta/Alfredo	PACT	Hansen/Ferraris
1971	<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Königin der Nacht/Tamino	CAPAB	Dalberg/Fischer
1971	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia/Edgardo	NAPAC	Conrad/Balkwill
1971	<i>La bohème</i>	Mimi/Rodolfo	NAPAC	Conrad/Cree
1973	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia/Edgardo	PACOFS	Conrad/Balkwill
1973	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia/Edgardo	NAPAC	Conrad/Balkwill

<b>Year</b>	<b>Opera</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Opera Company</b>	<b>Producer/Conductor</b>
1973	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Cio-Cio-San/ Pinkerton	NAPAC	Gobbato/Balkwill
1974	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	Lucia/Edgardo	PACT	Hansen/Quayle
1974	<i>Andrea Chénier</i>	Madeleine/ Andrea Chénier	NAPAC	Conrad/Ferraris
1974	<i>Carmen</i>	Micaëla/ Don José	NAPAC	Conrad/Ferraris
1974	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Rosalinde/ Alfred	CAPAB	Gobbato/Tidboald
1975	<i>Tosca</i>	Tosca/Mario Cavaradossi	PACOFS	Haikes/Balkwill
1975	<i>Andrea Chénier</i>	Madeleine/ Andrea Chénier	NAPAC	Conrad/Ferraris
1975	<i>Turandot</i>	Liù/Calaf	NAPAC	Rezai/Ferraris
1975	<i>Il trovatore</i>	Leonora/ Manrico	NAPAC PACOFS	Conrad/Pryce-Jones
1976	<i>La bohème</i>	Mimi/Rodolfo	PACT	Hansen/Quayle
1976	<i>Jenůfa</i>	Jenůfa/ Laca Klemenř	PACT	Anderson/Quayle
1976	<i>Faust</i>	Marguerite/ Faust	NAPAC	Conrad/Pryce-Jones
1978	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Rosalinde/ Eisenstein	PACT	Hansen/Kern

In the twenty years from 1959 to 1978, Du Toit and Korsten appeared together in thirty opera seasons, of which one in the fifties, nine in the sixties and twenty in the seventies.

## APPENDIX VIII

### DISCOGRAPHY: NELLIE DU TOIT

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#### RECORDS

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##### SOLO RECORDS

#### NELLIE DU TOIT SINGS FOR YOUR PLEASURE/SING VIR U GENOT

**Hennie Joubert piano/klavier**

1964 (Gallo)

##### Side 1

Ave Maria	(Bach - Gounod)
Maria Wiegenlied	(Reger)
Sluimerlied	(Le Roux Marais)
Wiegeliel	(Barry)
O, du liebs Ängeli	(Trad.)
Londonderry Air	(Trad.)
The cockle gatherer	(Trad.)

##### Side 2

Plaisir d'amour	(Martini)
I had a dove (Die duifie)	(Fagan)
Klein Sonneskyn	(Fagan)
Silent noon	(Vaughan Williams)
Do not go my love	(Hageman)
Go not happy day	(Bridge)

#### DIE LAASTE SOMERROOS

**Nellie du Toit**

**Die Newkirk Orkes onder leiding van Zane Cronjé**

(s.d.) (1970?) Brigadiers (BRS 281)

##### Kant 1

Die laaste somerroos	(Flotow)
Liefdesvoëltjie	(Crouse)
Vaarwel my beminde seeman (Adios marzuita linda)	(Jeminez)
Hoor die voëlgesang (Lo! Hear the gentle lark)	(Bishop)
Morgen	(Moesser)
My hartewens (I'm praying to St. Christopher)	(Von Tilzer)

##### Kant 2

Nagtegaal (Russian Nightingale)	(Alabiev)
As die awendskadus daal (When I grow too old to dream)	(Romberg, Hammerstein)
Huistoe gaan (Going home)	(Dvořák)
Slaap my kindjie slaap sag	(Geni Sabero)

(Fa la nanna bambino)  
Moederhuis (Home sweet home) (Trad. Arr. Crouse)  
Nadat ons saam gewals het (Trad. Arr. Crouse)  
(After the ball)

### **RECORDS WITH GÉ KORSTEN**

#### **SOET HERINNERINGE**

**Gé Korsten/ Nellie du Toit (accompaniment not stated)**

(s.d.) (1968?) Brigadiers (BRS 274) (composers not stated on SABC Arcactive database)

##### Side 1

Soet herinneringe (Leslie, Nicholls/ Translated by Anna Visser)  
Walslied (Lehár)  
Lara se tema (Jarre)  
Op vleuels van gesange (Mendelssohn/Arr. Cronjé)  
Kom dans Klaradyn (Le Roux Marais)  
Skone dag (Jacobs, Bond)

##### Side 2

Skenk jy my rose (Zeller)  
As die aandwind van heimwee sing (Trad./Arr. A. Viljoen)  
Vergange se dae (Silcher/Celliers)  
A, wat 'n lieflike dag (Rodgers and Hammerstein)  
Gee my jou hand (Mozart/Arr. Korsten)  
Saggies sweef my lied (Schubert/Translated by Anna Visser)

#### **SWEETHEARTS**

**Gé Korsten/Nellie du Toit**

**Orchestra arranged and conducted by Dan Hill**

(s.d.) (1968?1969?) Brigadiers (BR 192) (published by Brigadiers and distributed by Gallo)

##### Side 1

Will you remember (Romberg)  
Moonlight and roses (Black, Moret, Lemar)  
Donkey serenade (Wright, Forrest, Friml, Stothart)  
True love (Porter)  
Games that lovers play (Kusik, Snyder, Last)  
Wanting you (Romberg, Hammerstein)

##### Side 2

One day when we were young (Strauss, Tiomkin, Hammerstein)  
Only a rose (Friml, Hooker)  
Love is my reason (Novello)  
People will say (Rodgers, Hammerstein)  
Greensleeves (Geeht)  
We'll gather lilacs (Novello)

## **NIGHT OF LOVE**

**Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten**

**George Hayden Musical director/Accompaniment not stated**

(s.d.) (1968?) Brigadiers (BRS 215)

Loveliest night of the year	(Aronson/Webster)
Whispering hope	(Hawthorn/exempt)
They didn't believe me	(Kern-Reynolds)
Wunderbar	(Porter)
Lover come back to me	(Romberg-Hammerstein)
Indian love call	(Friml/Hammerstein)
Schenkt man sich Rosen in Tirol	(Zeller)
I'll see you again	(Coward)
Night of love	(Offenbach)
Lay my head beneath a rose	(Madison-Falkenstein)
Deep in my heart	(Donnelly-Romberg)
This is my lovely day	(Ellis-Chappell & Company)

## **THE STUDENT PRINCE**

**Gé Korsten – Nellie du Toit**

**The Newkirk Orchestra arranged and conducted by Hennie Bekker and George Hayden**

Brigadiers (BRS 252)

Serenade	(Romberg-Donnelly)
Student's marching song	(Romberg-Donnelly)
Drinking song	(Romberg-Donnelly)
Gaudeamus igitur	(Romberg-Donnelly)
Deep in my heart	(Donnelly-Romberg)
I'll walk with God	(Nicholas Brodsky)
They say that falling in love is wonderful	(Berlin)
O what a beautiful morning	(Rodgers-Hammerstein)
Look for the silver lining	(De Sylva)
Softly as in a morning sunrise	(Hammerstein-Rodgers)
People will say we're in love	(Rodgers-Hammerstein)
I love you	(G.Grieg-R.Wright-B.Forrest-C.Porter)

## **COMPACT DISC**

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### **NELLIE DU TOIT – ENCORE**

**(Recordings: SABC Archives; Digital remastering, Production and Design: Die Nes Jeugproduksies) (DNJP CD 004) (s.a.)**

#### **6 songs for soprano, clarinet and piano (Spohr)**

1. Sei still mein Herz
2. Zwiengesang
3. Sehnsucht
4. Wiegenlied
5. Das heimliche Lied
6. Wach auf

**Jimmy Reinders (clarinet) Anna Bender (piano)**

- 7. Nachtlied (Schumann)
- 8. Um Mitternacht (Brahms)
- 9. Eine gute, gute Nacht (Brahms)
- 10. Nachtgang (R. Strauss)
- 11. Die Nacht (R. Strauss)
- 12. O stay my love (Rachmaninov)

**Albie van Schalkwyk (Piano)**

- 13. Eriskay Love Lilt (Kennedy-Fraser)
- 14. O du liebs Ängeli (Arr. Robert Gund)

**Sini van den Brom (Piano)**

- 15. Widow Bird (Kirby)
- 16. Cradle song (Kirby)

**SABC Symphony Orchestra/Edgar Cree (conductor)**

- 17. One fine day (*Madama Butterfly* – Puccini) (live recording)

**SABC Symphony Orchestra /Edgar Cree (conductor)**

- 18. Regnava nel silenzio (*Lucia di Lammermoor* – Donizetti)

**SABC Symphony Orchestra/Jeremy Schulman (conductor)**

- 19. Vissi d'arte (*Tosca* – Puccini)

**SABC Symphony Orchestra/Jeremy Schulman (conductor)**

- 20. Ernani involami (*Ernani* – Verdi)

**SABC Symphony Orchestra/Anton Hartman (conductor)**

**SABC TRANSCRIPTION RECORDINGS NOT DESTROYED**

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**Nellie du Toit (soprano) Anna Bender (piano)**

LT6481A (Shelf No. T9781)

Side 1

- Die lewerkie (Eyssen)
- Amoreuse liedeken (Bon)
- Die roos (Bon)
- Treurlied (Le Roux Marais)
- Mali, die slaaf se lied (Le Roux Marais)
- Die schöne Nacht (Löwenherz)
- Wiegenlied (Löwenherz)
- Sing vinkie sing (Löwenherz)

Side 2

- Die donkerstroom (Beyers, Doris)
- Slampamperliedjie No. 1 (Beyers)
- Slampamperliedjie No. 2 (Beyers)
- Amor se konfetti (Beyers)
- Aandblik (Beyers)
- Sneeu op die berge (Beyers)

**Nellie du Toit (soprano) Anna Bender (piano)**  
LT6483A\*(T4168)(T4169C) (Shelf No. LT6483A\*)  
(composers not stated on SABC Arcactive database)

Side 1  
Serenade  
Aan blomme  
Styging  
Wyl rose daal  
Trane  
Wiegeliedjie

**Nellie Du Toit (soprano) Heinz Alexander (piano)**  
LT7960A\* (Shelf No. LT7960A\*) (composers not stated on SABC Arcactive database)

Side 1  
As die winter nader kruip  
Sluimer beminde  
My hartbeeshuisie  
My tuisland se woude  
Die brug op ons plaas

Side 2  
Wildebergroos  
Amor se konfetti  
'n Liedjie van verlange  
Kom ons gaan blomme pluk

**Nellie du Toit (soprano) Heinz Alexander (piano)**  
(Shelf No. LT7962A\*) (composers not stated on SABC Arcactive database)

Side 1  
Bolandse nooientjie  
Was jy verdwaal  
Op vleuels van gesange  
Soem, soem, soem  
Feëlied

Side 2  
Lettie klein  
Hansie slilm  
Dansliedjie  
Raaisels

**Nellie du Toit (soprano) Heinz Alexander (piano)**  
(Shelf No. LT7964A\*) (composers not stated on SABC Arcactive database)

Side 1  
Die meul  
Met 'n mandjie rose

Vegeet my nie  
O boereplaas  
Annie Hugo  
Ou Karooland

**Nellie du Toit (soprano) Rudi Neitz (bass)**

Opera/Concert Arias (Shelf No. CDT1200)

(on CD with other opera singers, (i.a.) Doris Brasch, Bob Borowsky, Joyce Barker)

Side 1 cut 5:

La ci darem la mano (Mozart)

**CATALOGUE OF RECORDED ITEMS BY NELLIE DU TOIT  
AVAILABLE IN SABC MUSIC ARCHIVES ON ARCACTIVE DATABASE**

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Title	Performer	Shelf No.	Status	Comm. No.
1. Sweethearts	Du Toit	3735C	Available	BR192
2. Soet herinneringe	Du Toit	24949	Available	BRS 274
3. Die laaste somerroos	Du Toit	52665C	Available	BRS281
4. Nellie du Toit sing	H. Joubert	21464C	Available	GALP1305
5. Nellie du Toit /Jimmy	Du Toit	CD1448*	Available	CDT1448
6. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	LT6481A*	Available	LT6481/2
7. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit/Bend	T9781	Available	LT6481/2
8. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	LT6483*	Available	LT6483
9. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T4168	Available	LT6483
10. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T4169	Available	LT6483
11. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit/Alex	LT7960A*	Available	LT7960/1
12. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8198	Available	LT7960/1
13. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8199	Available	LT7960/1
14. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit/Alex	LT7962A*	Available	LT7962/3
15. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8200	Available	LT7962/3
16. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8201	Available	LT7962/3
17. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	LT7964A*	Available	LT7964
18. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8202	Available	LT7964
19. Nellie du Toit	Du Toit	T8293	Available	LT7964

(Search results on 7 March 2001)



**APPENDIX IX**  
**TAPE RECORDINGS IN SABC SOUND ARCHIVES FEATURING NELLIE DU TOIT**

**MUSIC**

<i>Service</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Viewname</i>	<i>Refer</i>
Sound Archives	Music Classic	James Williams Collection	<b>Du Toit/Anheiser Live 1958 broadcast of Friml and Rodgers music; conductor Jeremy Schulman</b>	TM 10015 (58)	1958	19:03	SABC Concert Orch, Rudolf Friml (Czech) James Williams, Recording Producer	Arcactive	Musical, Composers
Klankargief	Musiek Klassiek	Gert Potgieter: Privaatopnames	<b>Asterion</b>	TM 6892-6893 (58)	1958 0421	120:00	Potgieter, G., Du Toit, N., De la Porte, B., Badings, H., Hartman, A., SAUK Orkes		Sangers Dirigente Opera Orkeste
Sound Archives	Music Classical	James Williams Collection	<b>Nellie du Toit and Gé Korsten with Jos Cleber live in Klerksdorp</b>	TM 10014	19??	21:33	Schenkt man sich Rosen, Dit is die mooiste dag (Gé Korsten), Deep in my heart dear (Gé Korsten en Nellie du Toit) (J. Williams notes that take should be kept for historical/ documentary value)		

<i>Service</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Viewname</i>	<i>Refer</i>
Sound Archives	Music Classical	Recording	<b>Nellie du Toit performs a few works</b>	TM 9196 (94)	1984 1004	30:00	Du Toit, N., Soprano Schulman, J. conductor Hartman, A. conductor SABC Orchestra	Only a rose, Why do I love you (Schulman) Vissi d' arte, Ernani (Hartman)	
Klankargief	Musiek Klassiek	Opname	<b>Hubert du Plessis Kruik Orkes/ Stellenbosch Universiteits-koor o.l.v. Christopher Dowdeswell (Privaatopname nie uitsaibaar nie) Hubert du Plessis: Suid-Afrika – nag en daeraad Op. 29</b>	TM 8708 (?)	19???	20:06			

### **INTERVIEWS**

<i>Service</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Viewname</i>	<i>Refer</i>
Afrikaanse Diens	Onderhoud	Vrouekunstenars van ons land	<b>Danie Erasmus Onderhoud met Nellie du Toit</b>	T 64/24	1964				

<i>Service</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Viewname</i>	<i>Refer</i>
Afrikaanse Diens	Onderhoud	Vrouerubriek	<b>Naweekjoernaal: Suzanne van Wijk gesels met Nellie du Toit-sukses in Opera Kaapstad opgetree</b>	T 69/144	1969 0711	15:13	Van Wyk/Du Toit Contents: Wanneer begin sing, Pietersburg-distr. Gebore-skooljare-werk en verder studies-twee jaar in Engeland-toere in SA-huwelik-sukses seisoen Kaap-geliefkoosde operarolle wat graag wil vertolk-moeder en huisvrou-kindertoe-komsplanne-Plaisir d'amour-opname		
Afrikaanse Diens	Onderhoud	Afrikaanse Sangers	<b>Nellie du Toit gesels met Cobus Robinson oor haar lewe en sangloopbaan</b>	TM 607(67)	1967 0801	20:15	Musikale familie, Pietersburg, waar belangstelling vandaan, kursus in opera, oorsese toere, Italiaanse opera		
Afrikaanse Diens	Onderhoud	Monitor	<b>Die Nederburg Prys vir Opera in die Vrystaat is aan Nellie du Toit toegeken vir haar vertolking van die titelrol in Tosca</b>	T 75/176	1975 0918	1:15	Du Toit		
Afrikaanse Diens	Musiek Klassiek Onderhoud	Suid-Afrikaanse Musiekmakers	<b>André Blom in gesprek met Nellie du Toit</b>	T 83/638	1983 1210	29:35	Du Toit /Blom		

Radio Suid-Arfika	Musiek Klassiek Onderhoud	In gesprek met...	<b>Nellie du Toit: Cecile Pracher in gesprek met die sopraan Nellie du Toit</b>	TM 4430 (89)	1989 0119	29:07	Du Toit, Nellie, Pracher, Cecile Stemvorming, toonkwaliteit, vertolking, belangrikheid van woorde en woordtegniek		
Klankargief	Musiek Klassiek Hoorbeeld	Hoorbeeld: Nellie du Toit	<b>Hoorbeeld oor die sopraan Nellie du Toit opgestel en aangebied deur Eben Cruywagen</b>	TM 9186 (94)	1994 1025	30:00	Malie die slaaf se lied, Handel: Julius Caesar, I can give you the starlight, Rooidag, Verdi: Traviata Act 1		

#### **TV RECORDINGS**

<i>Service</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Cat. No.</i>	<i>Recording</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Viewname</i>	<i>Refer</i>
	Musiek Klassiek	TV Opnames	<b>Nellie du Toit: Spesiale program van TV opname van Nellie du Toit, Oktober 1985</b>	TM 9197 (94)	1985 1011	80:00	Deelnemers: gesin: Nellie du Toit, Philip Crouse, Christine Nolte, Florence Stassen, Nelmarie du Toit, Phyllis du Plessis, René Nolte, Johan Stassen, Jos du Toit, Willie du Plessis, Gé Korsten, Acáma Fick (dirigent), Heidemarie Lubbe (Sopraan, student), Henk Klijnhans (Tenaar, student)		

Source:  
Correspondence with Cate Mateta, Sound Archives, SABC, 14 February 2001.

*APPENDIX X*  
**CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN SOPRANOS**  
**(in alphabetical order)**

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This Appendix can be helpful in forming a view of Nellie du Toit's career in context with more or less contemporary South African sopranos of whom short biographies will be given here. The sopranos selected here were either double cast in a role with Du Toit, or were her co-artists in opera productions. Others had careers that ran parallel to that of Du Toit, either in South Africa or abroad. Mimi Coertse, Emma Renzi and Hanlie van Niekerk belong to this category of sopranos who lived in Europe and followed active singing careers abroad, but had sung in South Africa occasionally before returning permanently to their fatherland in the seventies. The soprano Joyce Barker concurrently pursued her career in South Africa and Europe.

Contemporaries of Du Toit (born 1929) who were also born in the twenties, include Gudrun Barrella (1925), Emma Renzi (1926), Désirée Talbot (1926), Hanlie van Niekerk, Joy van Niekerk (1929), Doris Brasch (1929). Saline Koch and Jossie Boshoff (1918) were about ten years her senior. Those born in the thirties are Rita Roberts (1931), Joyce Barker (1931-1992), Mimi Coertse (1932), Virginia Oosthuizen (1933), Leonore Veenemans (1935-1973), Margaretha Deysel (1936), Marita Napier (1939) and Jeanette Bezuidenhout. Sopranos born in the forties are Carla Pohl (1943), Wendy Fine (1943) and Rikie Venter. They are listed below in alphabetical order:

The dramatic soprano **Joyce Barker** was born in Mooirivier, Natal in 1931 and started singing lessons in Durban under Daisy Holmes at the age of nineteen. She furthered her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London for three years. Since 1954 she sang at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden in operas by Wagner, Verdi and Boito, among others. From 1955 to 1959 she continued her studies with, among others, Maria Hittorff in Vienna and Eduardo Pedrazolli in Italy who coached her in the Italian opera repertoire for four years. In 1963 she returned to South Africa and made name for herself as soloist in radio broadcasts and in concerts for all four Arts Councils. Her repertoire included operas such as *Nabucco*, *Il trovatore*, *Macbeth*, *Don Carlos*, *Il tabarro*, *Aida*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni* and *Cavalleria rusticana*. While based in South Africa in the sixties and seventies, Barker continued her international career, singing, among others, at the New York City Opera and in Strasbourg. Apart from her singing commitments, she lectured part time at the Wits University Opera School. She died in 1992 (Malan [ed.] 1980b: 133; S.S. 1979; Odendaal 1992).

**Godrun Barrella** was born in 1925 in Stralsund, Germany, where she made her stage debut at the age of five. After the war she commenced her vocal studies with Lena Wagner in Munich. She emigrated to Australia in 1952, taking up singing activities with the Melbourne opera group, first as chorister and then in smaller roles. After six years she left Australia with her husband who then worked in Uganda, from where they came to settle in South Africa in 1960. Barrella furthered her vocal studies with Adelheid Armhold at the College of Music in Cape Town, obtaining her Performer's and Teacher's Licentiates while studying for a B.A. Mus. through UNISA. From 1967 to 1968 she was a lecturer in singing at the University of Stellenbosch, whereupon she joined PACOFS from 1969 to 1972 as soloist. From 1973 to her retirement in 1990 she was a lecturer in singing at the University of the Orange Free State. In 1991 she moved to Cape Town and became a part-time lecturer at the Bellville Academy of Music where she still teaches. Her repertoire includes roles such as Tosca, Cio-Cio-San, Mimì, Masetta, Micaëla, Suor Angelica and Desdemona. She also performed in oratorio and concerts, with a predilection for the French art song, working with accompanists such as Lamar Crowson (Barrella 2002).

**Doris Brasch**, born on 19 September 1929 in Johannesburg, received vocal training from the age of fourteen. She became well known through lieder recitals over the radio and her interpretation of some operas. She frequently undertook concert tours with the baritone Bob Borowsky and appeared with Symphony Orchestras in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. She has made several commercial recordings, and has made an unique impact with the recordings of children's songs with Dawie Couzyn. She also made several records of Afrikaans traditional and popular music, as soloist as well as with Couzyn. Brasch toured with PACT and NAPAC and appeared in Namibia. She sang at the inauguration of the first President of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 and at the opening of the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg. Since 1973, she presented educational programmes for schools (Malan [ed.] 1980c: 229).

**Jeanette Bezuidenhout**, lyric coloratura soprano, hails from Pretoria. She commenced vocal tuition with Aimée Parkerson in 1957 and continued her private studies with Albrecht Lewald. In 1961 she continued her studies with Erna Berger in Hamburg, whereupon she was contracted to the opera house of Oberhausen in 1966. She sang as chorister and soloist at the Volksoper in Vienna, and ended her ten-year stay in Europe in Detmold, where she sang the roles of Lucia, Masetta, and Susanna and all three soprano roles in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. She returned to South Africa in 1971 and took up a permanent position with PACOFS, undertaking many tours through the Orange Free State.

She also performed in Durban and Cape Town. Her roles include Gilda, Norina, Konstanze and Blondchen. She sang the Queen of the Night for the opening of the Roodepoort Opera. In 1983 she accepted a post as lecturer in singing at the Windhoek Conservatoire of Music (Harris 2002).

**Jossie (Josina Wilhelmina) Boshoff<sup>1</sup>**, who was married to the well-known South African conductor Anton Hartman, was born in Philippolis in the Orange Free State in 1918. She started broadcasting in 1935 and appeared in major cities and towns in South Africa in concerts and opera. From 1950 to 1952 she furthered her studies in Vienna under Maria Hittorff. Returning to South Africa in 1952 she played an active part in the revival of opera in the fifties and thereafter. She sang in operas by Mozart, Menotti, Puccini, Verdi and Bellini, among others. Some highlights were the roles Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*) and the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*). She sang under conductors such as Sir Malcom Sargent and Jascha Horenstein and broadcast for the BBC and in the Netherlands. Boshoff also excelled in oratorio and in the interpretation of lieder and Afrikaans songs. She retired in 1970 for health reasons (Malan [ed.] 1982: 167; Programme 1960e).

**Mimi Coertse** was born in Durban in 1932. She made her debut at the Johannesburg City Hall in December 1951 in Handel's *Messiah*. Coertse received her first vocal training from Aimée Parkerson in Johannesburg, before leaving for Vienna in 1954 to study singing with Maria Hittorff, lied interpretation with Victor Graeff and opera-related subjects at the State Academy for Arts and Sciences in Vienna. Barely a year later she signed a contract with the Vienna State Opera Company for a tour to Italy during which she made her European debut as the First Flower Maiden in Wagner's *Parsifal*.

In 1955 she also made her debut in Basle in the role that first brought her fame and that initially almost became her trade mark: the Queen of the Night. She sang this coloratura role more than 500 times at most of the European opera centres and festivals. Her spectacular debut in this role at the Vienna State Opera, on 17 March 1956, led to her eventual permanent appointment at the Vienna State Opera. Apart from memorable successes in roles such as Gilda, Violetta and Lucia, Coertse received the highest acclaim for her contribution to some of the (then) lesser performed operas by Richard Strauss: Fiakermilli in *Arabella*, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne of Naxos*, Daphne in *Daphne*, Aithra in *Die ägyptische Helena* and Aminta in *Die schweigsame Frau*.

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<sup>1</sup> See under Hartman, Josina Wilhelmina in *SAME*.

Coertse's excellence as Mozart singer came to the fore in her portrayal of the soprano lead roles in *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. Coertse, whose mother tongue is Afrikaans, astonished the Viennese music world with her seemingly inborn gift for the art of the Viennese operetta, in which she excelled. Her versatility also found outlet in the genres of the lied, oratorio, cantata and passion, covering style periods from the Baroque to contemporary twentieth-century music. As concert artist she performed in many important European music centres and music festivals. She appeared in numerous television programmes and in opera presentations on television of Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* (in Germany) and Puccini's *Suor Angelica* (for SATV, for which she received an Artes award). Mimi Coertse received the honorary title of "Kammersängerin" of Austria from the Austrian government in 1966. She returned permanently to South Africa in 1973, at the height of her European career, although she still visited Austria as guest artist for many years.

Coertse's South African career included intermittent appearances as opera and concert artist while she followed her career abroad. Since 1973 she appeared regularly in South Africa in opera, concerts, recitals, radio and television. Her important contribution to the popularizing of the Afrikaans art song and folksong is one of her artistic and cultural-historical legacies. Coertse supported fellow South African musicians by means of her *Debut with Mimi* series and the Mimi Coertse Bursary. In 1996 she received the highest accolade from the Austrian government, the *Österreichisches Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst*. In 1998 she was awarded the honorary degree D. Phil by the University of Pretoria. Further South African honorary awards include a Medal of Honour (1961) and Honorary Membership (2002) from the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the State President's Decoration for Meritorious Service (1985). (Malan [ed.] 1980e: 272-274; Viljoen 1986a; Fick 2002b).

**Margaretha Deysel** was born in Springs in 1936 and received her training as an opera singer at the Conservatoire in Vienna. For four years she was contracted to the Graz opera house in Austria and returned to South Africa in 1965 after spending eight years in Europe (Programme 1970:56). In 1966 she sang opposite Nellie du Toit in *Die Fledermaus* and *The Bartered Bride* for PACT. For PACOFS, whom she joined as permanent member from 1969 to 1970, she sang roles such as Frasquita, Cio-Cio-San and Mimi, which she also sang for NAPAC. In 1971 she sang Micaëla for CAPAB.



Having formed the “Sangersgilde” in 1981, she staged several operas such as *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Cavalleria rusticana*, in which she sang the role of Santuzza, her last opera role.

Deysel recorded many lieder programmes for the SABC and performed art songs on television. Her interest in lieder led to the forming of the “Liedmakersgilde” which she founded with her husband Johan Stemmet, Albie van Schalkwyk and Hanna van Niekerk in Cape Town in 1994. This “guild” presents lieder recitals on a regular basis. As a voice teacher Deysel lectured part-time at the University of Stellenbosch. Since 1999 up to the present (2002) she holds a post as lecturer at the University of the Western Cape (Deysel 2002).

**Sylvia Faktor** was born in Paarl. In the forties she trained at the College of Music in Cape Town with Alessandro Rota. She briefly furthered her studies in Italy in 1948 whereupon she returned to South Africa (Programme 1957a).

**Wendy Fine** was born on 19 December 1943 in Durban. She studied in South Africa and at the Vienna Music Academy with Maria Hittorff and Erik Werba and made her debut at the Stadttheater Bern as Madame Butterfly. She has sung at Covent Garden from 1971 to 1977 as Musetta, Guttrune, Donna Elvira, Fiordiligi and Jenůfa and at La Scala in 1977 as Berg’s Marie. As opera singer she appeared in major European cities such as Lisbon, Vienna, and Geneva. She also sang at the Bayreuth Festival in 1971. Her roles include Nedda, Micaëla, Marguerite, Mimì, Desdemona, Fiordiligi, Pamina. She also sang in lesser known and contemporary operas such as Szokolay’s *Hamlet* and Martinů’s *The Miracles of Our Lady* (Cummings [ed.] 2001: 198).

**Saline Koch** was born in Vryburg in 1918. She commenced her studies in singing at the South African College of Music in 1936 and graduated with a Performer’s and Teacher’s Licentiate in violin and singing in 1940. Her professional career as singer started in 1945 in Johannesburg as Micaëla in John Connell’s Afrikaans production of Bizet’s *Carmen*. She sang principal roles until 1953 and then sang in productions under P. R. Kirby and J. Traunek. She sang for the National Opera Association and the South African Opera Federation. Koch moved to Cape Town in 1963 where she sang roles for CAPAB and also undertook educational tours to rural areas. Koch had a repertoire of 22 main roles. During her career she also featured as recording artist for the SABC and as a soloist in oratorio and symphonic works.

Participation in the annual oratorio festivals in Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg between 1951 and 1955 were among the highlights in her career. From 1970 to 1974 she worked as music librarian in a music shop and then became music librarian for the CAPAB orchestra (Malan [ed.] 1984b: 137).

The dramatic soprano **Marita Napier**, born on 16 February 1939, studied in South Africa and in Detmold. She made her debut in Bielefeld in 1969 in the role of Venus from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. She sang in major German cities and at the Bayreuth Festival in 1974-1975 and held engagements in major European cities. She also sang in Covent Garden, La Scala and the Verona Festival. Her appearances in the United States included singing in the San Francisco Opera and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. In 1992 she became the Director of the PACT Opera Training Center in Pretoria. Napier's repertoire include Wagnerian roles such as Elsa, Brünhilde, Venus, Isolde, Sieglinde, Eva, Freia and Senta as well as Turandot, Elisabeth de Valois, Lady Macbeth and Tosca. Strauss roles include Ariadne and Chrysothemis (Cummings [ed.] 2001: 461).

**Virginia Oosthuizen**, born in 1933 in Stellenbosch, studied singing under Margaret Wandelt at the Stellenbosch Conservatoire. She furthered her vocal studies with Maria Hittorff in Vienna in the fifties, obtaining a lied and oratorio diploma. She sang professionally in Europe until 1963, when she married the bass Øystein Liltved. When she returned to South Africa with her family in 1967, she started singing for CAPAB and NAPAC mainly in Mozart roles, although she has a repertoire of about 18 operas to her credit. Her main emphasis lay on oratorio and lieder. She lectured at the College of Music from 1973 till 1978 (Malan [ed.] 1984g: 350-351).

**Carla Pohl** was born in Pietersburg in 1943 and studied singing with Anna-Elizabeth Pohl for three years (Programme 1963c) making her debut as alto in Johannesburg. She continued her studies at the Wiesbaden Conservatory. She appeared mainly in major German opera houses, such as Berlin, Munich and Deutsche Oper am Rhein, but also sang in the Vienna State Opera, in Milan and Rome, as well as Santiago, Chile. Her roles include Tosca, Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier*, Mařenka in *Prodaná nevěsta* as well as Wagnerian roles such as Elisabeth, Eva and Sieglinde. She sang Strauss roles such as the Empress (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), Ariadne, Chrysothemis and Marschallin as well as Leonore in *Fidelio*. In 1985 she undertook a tour of South Africa (Cummings [ed.] 2001: 512).

**Emma Renzi (Emmarentia Scheepers)** was born in Heidelberg, Transvaal, in 1926. She received her first vocal training from Esther Mentz in Johannesburg before enrolling at the South African College of Music in 1943 for a B. Mus. degree. In 1947 she furthered her studies in London under Joan Cross and started touring with the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1951.

Renzi continued her studies in 1954 under Roy Henderson while singing with the English Opera Group. She shared the second prize with Teresa Berganza at the International Singing Competition in Genève in 1956 and became the first South African to sing at the Edinburgh Festival in 1957. In 1958 she continued her training in Catania, Sicily under maestro Santonocito, performing as lyric-dramatic soprano. From 1961 to 1962 she sang dramatic roles in Karlsruhe, Germany. Based in Milan since 1963 and singing in many Italian theatres, she started singing under the name Emma Renzi.

Renzi made her debut at La Scala in the role of Abigail in *Nabucco*, in 1966, substituting Elena Suliotis. She was not only the first South African singer ever to sing at La Scala but also the first to make a career in Italy, which she concluded in 1978. In the sixties and seventies, she performed in major European cities as well as the United States and South America. She made intermittent appearances in opera in South Africa in 1963 (*Tosca*), 1964 (*Il trovatore*), 1965 and 1966 (*Nabucco*). Emma Renzi can boast the ‘hat trick’ achievement of partaking in the opening productions of three of the major theatres in South Africa, singing Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera* for the opening of the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg in 1962, *Aida* for the opening of the Nico Malan Theatre in Cape Town in 1971 and excerpts from *Aida* in the opening production “Applause” of the State Theatre in Pretoria in 1981. In 1980 she accepted the post as director of the Opera School of the Pretoria Technikon (Malan [ed.] 1986c: 174-176; Viljoen 1984).

**Rita Roberts**, born in 1931, appeared in operas of the various opera associations in the late fifties and early sixties. She also sang for the Rota Opera Association. After a time of silence, she made her comeback in opera between 1970 and 1977, singing in six operas in the Cape and the Transvaal. She retired from singing in 1977 (Malan [ed.] 1986a: 147).

**Désirée Talbot**, born in Cape Town in 1926, pursued an active singing career in South Africa but also has a long academic career to her credit. After completing a B. Mus. at UCT, majoring in piano, she started as a music teacher and pianist, and became a lecturer in singing and piano at the College of Music, Cape Town, in 1954.

Her interests in singing were aroused ever since her student years at UCT. Inspired by the dynamic Prof. Erik Chisholm, she developed a zeal for the opera stage, which was intensified by the second major influence in her operatic career, Gregorio Fiasconaro, head of the Opera School.

Highlights early in her career were concerts in the London Wigmore Hall and a tour of the UCT Opera Company to Great Britain and Scotland in 1956, where she sang in the first British stage performance of Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. Although she was offered numerous singing opportunities in London in the late fifties, she opted to return to South Africa. In 1960 she received a bursary for advanced study in Italy from the Italian Government, studying with Gina Cigna in Milan.

After lecturing singing at the Stellenbosch Conservatoire between 1962 and 1965, she was appointed Senior Lecturer in Singing at the UCT College of Music in 1967, and promoted to Associate Professor in 1979, lecturing in voice training, performing literature and repertoire of singing teaching as well as vocal teaching method. In 1984/85 she was appointed Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Music at UCT and Deputy Acting Director of the Faculty of Music, UCT. After her retirement she taught part-time at UCT until the end of 1994. Among her students who have an active singing career are the tenors Sidwill Hartman, Nicola Cencherle and George Mughovhani.

Throughout her career, she was the leading soprano in the UCT Opera Company, with more than five hundred performances of about thirty roles in twenty-eight operas to her credit. She was also heard in oratorio, recitals and radio broadcasts, and has sung all over South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, England Scotland and Italy. Her opera repertoire includes the title roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Mimi in *La bohème*. She retired from active singing in 1978 but returned to the stage of the Nico Malan Theatre in 1982 to sing Mamita in *Gigi*. Désirée Talbot also distinguished herself as writer by documenting her opera experience at the College of Music in the book *For the love of singing* and as the ghost writer for the biography of Gregorio Fiasconaro, *I'd do it again* (Uys 2001; Malan [ed.] 1986d: 320-322).

**Joy van Niekerk**, born on 8 June 1929 in Petrusburg, studied singing with Prof. George van der Spuy at the University of Stellenbosch as from 1950. During her studies she made her debut with the City Orchestra of Cape Town and was frequently heard over the radio.

After graduating with a B. Mus. degree and several Licentiate in Music, she continued her studies in London from 1954 to 1957. She there participated in lieder recitals and sang in opera (and operettas), in roles such as Gretel, Constanze, Gilda and Mimì. From 1958 to 1962 and in 1969 she lectured singing at the University of Stellenbosch while still singing in oratorio and lieder recitals. She studied with Adelheid Armhold between 1959-1962 and sang several first performances of songs by Hubert du Plessis and Rosa Nepgen (Stegmann 1986: 430-431).

### **Hanlie van Niekerk**

Was born in Johannesburg and grew up in the Western Transvaal. She started singing at an early age and, on leaving school, studied commercial art in Johannesburg and dramatic art at the University of Stellenbosch. She thereupon studied singing with Olga Rhyss and featured in two Afrikaans music films.

After her marriage in the early fifties, she lived on a farm in the Western Cape. In 1956 she continued her vocal studies at the Academy of Music in Vienna, where she was hailed the most promising soprano in many years. During that time she appeared on Austrian television and made her first recording for a German company. She joined the Bonn Opera in the sixties and later became principal soprano at the Kassel State Opera where she had a permanent position for several years. She returned to South Africa on intermittent visits singing for concert tours and opera productions such as *Die Zauberflöte* in 1960, and roles such as Marguerite (*Faust*) and Tatiana (*Eugene Onegin*) (record cover: Hanlie van Niekerk Recital, [s.d.]).

**Leonore Veenemans**, born in 1935 in Witbank, studied singing privately and then, with a bursary, in Vienna for six months. After her return, she sang in two operas. Three years later she decided to follow a singing career and performed for the various Arts Councils, as well as in music films. She also recorded popular songs. She furthered her studies in Milan in 1969 but died in a car accident in 1973. Barbara Veenemans, the sister of Leonore Veenemans, performed in operetta and musicals (Malan [ed.] 1986e: 451).

**Rikie Venter** was born in Rustenburg, Transvaal, ca. 1940. She initially studied speech and drama at the Teacher's Training College in Potchefstroom. During this time she took up her vocal studies with Sarie Serfontein-Theron and sang the leading role in a Gilbert and Sullivan musical. After completion of her studies, she enrolled at the Conservatory of Music in Pretoria to study with Nellie du Toit, who played a significant role in her stylistic, vocal and histrionic development.

She lived in Windhoek from 1965-1968 where she had her first professional experience in oratorio and in lieder recitals. During this period she furthered her studies at the Academy of Music in Vienna, studying voice production with Prof. Lunzer and lied interpretation under Erik Werba. On her return to South Africa, she continued her studies with Betsy de la Porte for the UNISA Performer's Licentiate. She started appearing for PACT in 1973.

She sang the role of Mimì for a country tour, the role of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Tebaldo in *Don Carlos* in 1975, Mimì in 1976 and Donna Elvira in 1977. In 1977 she made her television debut as Monica in Menotti's *The Medium*. She also sang Liù for PACOFS.

After her portrayal of Violetta in *La traviata* in Windhoek in 1978 she left for Germany, where she was contracted to the opera in Wuppertal until 1980. Guest performances took her to Munich, Aachen and Ulm. Her roles included Teresa in *Benvenuto Cellini* (Berlioz), Marie in *Die verkaufte Braut*, Gilda, Mimì and Violetta. She sang the world première of Kirchner's opera *Isaak Babel*. In the early eighties she moved to London from where she paid occasional visits to South Africa to sing roles such as Mimì, Gilda, Liù and Contessa Almaviva for PACT, as well as Konstanze and Donna Anna for Roodepoort. She received the Nederburg Opera Prize for her portrayal of Liù in *Turandot* for PACOFS and the title role in *Madama Butterfly* for PACT in 1986. She sang the role of Cio-Cio-San in Windhoek in 1988 and retired from the stage in the nineties (Viljoen 1983; Programme 1988).

**APPENDIX XI**  
**PRESS REVIEWS AND ARTICLES IN AFRIKAANS**  
**(in chronological order)**

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**1969 – CAPAB – Lucia di Lammermoor**

José Rodrigues-Lopez – *Die Burger* 14 June 1969

***Besondere Mylpaal vir Kaapse opera*<sup>1</sup>**

*Ná haar vertolking van die titelrol in KRUIK se opvoering Donderdagaand in die Alhambra-Teater van Donizetti se gewilde opera Lucia di Lammermoor, sal 'n mens nie meer na Nellie du Toit kan verwys as bloot 'n bekwame sangeres wie se artistieke persoonlikheid gekenmerk word deur ywer, pligsbesef en eerlike beskeidenheid nie.*

*Want met hierdie weergawe van Lucia het sy virtuose sang uit die allerhoogste rakke gelewer; en meer nog: het sy met bewonderenswaardige inlewingsvermoë deurgedring tot die wese van hierdie operaheldin wat nie, soos sy dikwels voorgestel word, 'n romantiese broeikasplant uit die vorige eeu was nie.*

*Nellie du Toit het voor 'n stampvol teater die volle betekenis van die dikwels misbruikte term 'musikaal' oorrumpelend geïllustreer. In die waansinstoneel het sy alle fasette van dié jong vrou se wanhoop belig, en daarin innige teerheid én raserny ineen laat vloei. Elke passasie het sy van binne uit gesing, sodat daar oomblikke was dat haar stem 'n mens diep ontroer het.*

*So 'n vertolking weet 'n mens agterna, is die gevolg van 'n jarelange identifikasie nie net met hierdie rol nie, maar ook met die geniale musiek van Donizetti.*

*Dat ons so lank op hierdie glansprestasie van Nellie du Toit moes wag, moet in die eerste plek toegeskryf word aan die artistieke insig van die sangeres self, wat haar nie wou toelaat om so 'n groot en veeleisende rol te vroeg te onderneem nie. En hoe wys sy was om te wag, word oortuigend deur haar Lucia bewys – met dié optrede het die beskrywing “ 'n Suid-Afrikaanse prima donna ” verhoogde status gekry.*

Unidentified author – *Beeld* 15 June 1969

***Nellie du Toit onder die grootstes*<sup>2</sup>**

*'n Ovasie soos die Suid-Afrikaanse sopraan Nellie du Toit Donderdagaand in Kaapstad gekry het vir haar vertolking van die titelrol in Donizetti se opera Lucia di Lammermoor, het geen ander prima donna waarskynlik nog ooit op 'n Suid-Afrikaanse verhoog te beurt geval nie.*

*Sy het elke lid van die groot gehoor aan haar voete gehad. Selfs die orkes het opgestaan om haar toe te juig. Herhaaldelik is sy teruggeroep deur die entoesiastiese applous van die gehoor. Haar skitterende vertolking van hierdie baie moeilike rol het mense daarna laat verwys as “ 'n baken in die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrikaanse opera ”.*

*Die bekende Britse dirigent David Tidboald, wat in die gehoor was, het daarna gesê: “Ek het nog altyd geweet dat Nellie du Toit 'n ware kunstenaar is, maar nou beseef ek dat sy groot is.*

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<sup>1</sup> “Distinctive milestone for Cape Opera”.

<sup>2</sup> “Nellie du Toit among the greatest”.

*Ek het Maria Callas en Joan Sutherland in hierdie rol gesien, en ek sou Nellie du Toit se vertolking beslis in wêreldklas plaas. Sy was skitterend.” Gé Korsten, wat die manlike hoofrol teenoor haar gesing het, het gesê Nellie het nog nooit so goed gesing soos nou nie.*

*Die skugtere mej. Du Toit wat niks daarvan hou om oor haar eie sang te praat nie, het uiteindelik self erken dat sy nog nie tevore so ’n ovasie gehoor het nie. “Ek dink ek het met hierdie rol die toppunt van my operaloopbaan tot dusver bereik, maar ek dink ek kan nog verder ontwikkel”, het sy skamerig gesê. Die afgelope drie of vier maande het sy baie hard daaraan gewerk en moes sy ’n aanbod van TRUK van die hand wys omdat sy voel dat Lucia alles vra wat sy daaraan kan gee.*

*Verlede jaar het mnr. Louis Steyn, operabestuurder van KRUIK wat die huidige operaseisoen in Kaapstad reël, met haar die moontlikheid bespreek om vanjaar Lucia te sing. Dit is een van die moeilikste rolle wat nog ooit vir die menslike stem gekomponeer is. Net ’n koloratuursopraan met ’n geweldige bestek en buigsamheid van stem sowel as die vermoë om vokale toertjies uit te haal, kan dit oorweeg. Nellie du Toit het die uitdaging aanvaar.*

*Sy het vandeeweek ’n skitterende sukses daarvan gemaak, en haarself gevestig as ’n sangeres met wie die wêreld voortaan rekening sal moet hou.*

*Danksy Nellie du Toit en almal wat van hul beste gegee het, het dié opvoering van Lucia di Lammermoor ’n besondere mylpaal in KRUIK se operageskiedenis geword.*

## **1972 – PACOFS – Norma**

Dirkie de Villiers (D. de V.) – *Die Volksblad* 8 March 1972

### ***Nellie du Toit is ’n skitterende Norma***<sup>3</sup>

*Bravissimo Nellie du Toit! In ’n sangersopera soos Norma waar beweging tot ’n minimum beperk is, hang soveel van die welslae, al dan nie, van die hoofsangere se musikale, vokale en dramatiese vermoëns af. [...] Nellie du Toit (in die titelrol) mag al net so goed in haar lewe gesing het, maar beter nie.*

*Na ’n bevraagtekende aanvang by **Casta Diva** waar die orkes haar pianissimo-toon bykans verdring het, het alles voor die wind gegaan en het sy ’n volgehoue dramatiek, ’n tegniese perfekte vokale afronding en ’n onselfsugtige inskakeling by haar medesangere getoon wat geen operaverhoog ter wêreld oneer sou aangedoen het nie. By al haar voortreflikhede is daar drie wat in my geheue sal bly voortsteek: haar suiwer ornamentele melismas, haar musikale en nooit bulderende borstoon en die absolute ontspannendheid van haar hele optrede.”*

Philippa Breytenbach – *Die Transvaler* (s.d.) 1972

### ***Almal hoor Nellie behalwe ons***<sup>4</sup>

*Opera liefhebbers het Nellie du Toit al haar beste hoor lewer [...] maar ’n vertolking soos haar Norma het ons maar selde in ’n opera-opvoering gehoor. Dit is des te meer ’n skande dat hierdie sangeres haar beste in ander provinsies soos Kaapland, die Vrystaat en Natal moet lewer. Die kortsigtigheid van die operabestuur in Transvaal om ’n opera aan te bied waarin die sangeres haar staal kan toon laat ’n mens wonder wat al die probleme is. Maar dit nou daar gelaat.*

<sup>3</sup> “Nellie du Toit is a magnificent Norma”.

<sup>4</sup> “Everyone hears Nellie except we”.



*Ná 'n taamluk flou eerste bedryf waarin die groot aria Casta Diva [sic] heeltemal platgeval het vanweë die orkes wat die sopraan dood gespeel het, en die koor se 'vals' intonasie verder bygedra het om die aria te verongeluk, het die tweede bedryf op 'n opwindende noot begin.*

*Ook [vanweë] die feit dat mej. Du Toit te na aan die proscenium geplaas was (n regie-fout) en sy ook nog die gordynval gehad het om haar in die wiele te ry, was dit onmoontlik om die ongelooflike pianissimo 's wat sy kan sing in die Casta diva [sic] te hoor.*

*Maar in die tweede bedryf het sake anders begin verloop. Hier het ons met die artistieke vermoëns van die puik sangeres soos nooit te vore kennis gemaak nie. Haar spel en sang het die gehoor van pure bewondering en geesdrif op die randjie van hulle stoele gehad. Bravo Nellie du Toit! [...] In die duette het die twee sangeresse (Bets Bota as Adalgisa) pragtige sang gelewer. En dit is hier waar mej. Du Toit haar 'grootheid' as kunstenaars getoon het. Sy het nooit probeer om mej. Botha se onervarendheit [sic] uit te buite om die beste daarvan af te kom nie. Nee, sy het haar ondersteun en onderskraag soos ons selde van kunstenaars saam op 'n verhoog ondervind het.*

## **1972 – CAPAB – Madama Butterfly**

Pieter Kooij – Die Burger 29 May 1972

### ***Nellie du Toit groots as Butterfly***<sup>5</sup>

*Nellie du Toit is 'n ster wat alles en almal op die verhoog oorheers. Van die moment dat 'n mens haar nog van agter die skerms kon hoor, het sy geskitter en deurentyd geboei en ontroer. Haar sang is manjefik, [sic] haar toneelspel absoluut oortuigend.*

*In een sin: Nellie du Toit se Butterfly is die beste operavertolking hier in Kaapstad sedert haar onvergeetlike Lucia di Lammermoor van 'n paar jaar gelede. Gregorio Fiasconaro se regie was uiters speelbaar, David Tidboald se leiding van die KRUIK-Orkes deurentyd briljant.*

Philippa Breytenbach – Die Transvaler 2 June 1972

### ***Nellie het mense in tranes gehad***<sup>6</sup>

*Nellie du Toit, een van Transvaal se voorste soprane is met groot toejuiging deur operaresensente in Kaapstad lof toegeswaai vir haar optrede in Puccini se Madama Butterfly wat Saterdagmiddag sy première in die Nico Malan-skouburg gehad het. Die sopraan wat die trots van Transvaal is, en as Lucia in Donizetti se Lucia di Lammermoor Kapenaars se harte by verskeie geleenthede verower het, en vroeër vanjaar 'n onvergeetlike vertolking van Bellini se Norma in Bloemfontein gegee het, het operagangers in tranes gehad.*

*[...] Resensente het van haar optrede gesê: "Nellie du Toit se dinamiese vertolking het alles en almal op die verhoog oorheers [en] sy het geskitter en deurentyd geboei en ontroer. Haar sang is manjefik, [sic] haar toneelspel absoluut oortuigend. In een sin: Nellie du Toit se Butterfly is die beste operavertolking wat Kaapstad sedert haar onvergeetlike Lucia di Lammermoor van 'n paar jaar gelede beleef het.*

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<sup>5</sup> "Nellie du Toit great as Butterfly".

<sup>6</sup> "Nellie had people in tears".

## 1972 – PACT – *Don Giovanni*

Anton van Zyl – *Hoofstad* 24 July 1972

### *Don Giovanni is 'n triomf vir Nellie*<sup>7</sup>

*Nellie du Toit was Donna Anna, ewe uitstekend-gepas in hierdie rol wat sy ook in die musiek van Donna Elvira sou wees. Nellie du Toit se stem bereik nou eers sy volle ontplooiing en glans.*

*Daar is 'n nuwe briljans merkbaar, en haar koloratuurlopië word nou met 'n skitterende behendigheid hanteer. Voeg [daarby] dat hierdie kunstenaar se haar stem met groot soepelheid van nuanse aanwend, dan verstaan 'n mens ook sommer al dadelik waarom sy alle ander sangers op die verhoog in hierdie opsig in die verre skadu gestel het. Veral dink 'n mens hier aan haar pragtige vertolking van *Non mi dir*.*

## 1974 – PACT – *Lucia di Lammermoor*

Jozua van der Lugt – *Rapport* 31 March 1974

### *Truk-Opera trek ongelyk*<sup>8</sup>

*Nellie du Toit se waansintoneel is 'n stukkie heide wat ek in 'n geheueboek gaan pars en bêre en dikwels uithaal. Om nou nog oor haar verbasende tegniek te skryf, sou wees om dinge te sê wat almal reeds weet; maar om te ervaar hoedat tegniek met deurleefdheid, gevoel van atmosfeer en fyn-beplande toneelwerk gemeng word, was 'n belewenis so kosbaar soos die Skotse heidelande self!*

*Die stem was aan die begin van die aand nie so lekker nie, maar namate dit lossier geraak het, het daardie skoonheid na vore getree wat ons almal al leer liefkry het.*

*Die “dramatiese koloratuur”-benadering van die Lucia-rol hou natuurlik die gevaar in om jeugdigheid in te boet; in die tweede toneel veral sou so 'n bietjie meer opgewondenheid en jongmensverliefderigheid nie onvanpas gewees het nie.*

*Ongelukkig openbaar mej. Du Toit 'n neiging om kort-kort na die linkerkant te knak en dan soms haar hand op die linkersy te laat rus ook – maar waar was die regisseur se wakende oog? Tog het sy vir ons weereens bewys dat 'n operasangeres meer kan doen as 'n gepynigde gesig trek Haar reaksie op haar broer se woorde in die eerste toneel van die tweede bedryf was 'n sprekende voorbeeld van haar begaafdheid as speelster. Maar dit is daardie pragtige heide-takkie van die waansintoneel wat ek met my gaan meedra!*

Rudolf van Alk – *Hoofstad* 10 April 1974

### *Aangrypende Lucia bring nuwe roem vir Truk*<sup>9</sup>

#### *Nuwe hoogtepunt vir Nellie du Toit*

*Nellie du Toit se vertolking van Lucia het nie so sterk begin nie maar vanaf die mooi liefdesduet in die eerste bedryf het sy haar rol konsekwent opgebou. Haar opkoms in die tweede bedryf en haar reaksies op die onmenslike behandeling deur haar broer, Enrico, was aangrypend.*

<sup>7</sup> “Don Giovanni is a triumph for Nellie”.

<sup>8</sup> “Pact Opera uneven”.

<sup>9</sup> “Moving Lucia brings new fame for Pact” “New pinnacle for Nellie du Toit”.

*Sy het uitgestyg tot ongekende hoogtes, sowel dramaties as vokaal, in die waansintoneel [...] maar 'n mens kan feitlik hier nie 'n onderskeiding maak nie, so 'n groot eenheid van vertolkingskuns het sy gegee. Daar is dan nie meer sprake van koloratuur in die betekenis van leë stemskittering nie, maar elke lopies en fiorituur is uitbeelding van die gemoedstoestand. 'n Groot bravo vir hierdie prima donna!*

### **1975 – PACOFS – Norma**

Dirkie de Villiers (D. de V.) – *Die Volksblad* 3 March 1975

#### ***Tosca is 'n triomf vir Nellie***<sup>10</sup>

*Om Vissi d'arte na aan perfek te sing, is klaar 'n prestasie. Om egter van Tosca se eerste intrede in die eerste bedryf dwarsdeur tot aan die melodramatiese einde-selfmoord konsekwent elke nuanse, elke lopies en melodiesprong, elke beweging op die verhoog – hetsy alleen, hetsy met inagneming van die ander dramatis personae – sonder 'n merkbare fout, of 'n huiwering, of verlies aan rapport met die gehoor deur te voer, is die kenmerk van 'n groot operakunstenaar.*

*Hierin het Nellie du Toit se persoonlike triomf gelê waar sy Saterdagand die titelrol van Puccini se Tosca in die stadskouburg vertolk het. Dat sy hierdie kragtoer so musikaal en treffend met haar eerste probeerslag in die rol reggekry het, onderstreep haar prestasie.*

### **1976 – PACT – Jenûfa**

Henning Viljoen – *Die Vaderland* 2 August 1976

#### ***Truk se Janacek-opera [sic] van beste ter wêreld***<sup>11</sup>

*In die rol van Jenûfa [sic] het Nellie du Toit haar vorige prestasies nie net oortref nie, maar getoon waarom sy bekend staan as Suid-Afrika se miskende Diva [sic] – want met hierdie vertolking kan sy vir haar 'n volwaardige plek op enige internasionale operaverhoog verower. Sy was 'n Jenûfa met 'n kinderlike geloof en naïwe vertroue, wat op sy eerlikste na vore gekom het in die gebed in die tweede bedryf - 'n oomblik wat vir my uitgestyg het tot een van die roerendste ervarings wat ek nog in 'n opera beleef het.*

Wouter de Wet – *Die Transvaler* 2 August 1976

#### ***Nellie uitmuntend in Janacek-opera [sic]***<sup>12</sup>

*In die titelrol gee Nellie du Toit 'n grootse vertolking. Haar uitbeelding van die fisiek robuuste en emosionele onderdrukte jong vrou is roerend en haar sang briljant. Daar is oomblikke wat 'n mens nooit sal vergeet nie: Haar verdediging van die dronk Stewa [sic] in die eerste bedryf, haar gebed in die tweede bedryf, haar laaste blik in die finale na die huis waar sy grootgeword het en nou verlaat. Wonderlik! [The caption of the adjacent photo reads:] “Nellie du Toit gee een van die beste vertolkings van haar loopbaan in die titelrol van Janacek [sic] se opera Jenûfa [sic]”.*

<sup>10</sup> “Tosca is a triumph for Nellie”.

<sup>11</sup> “Pact’s Janacek [sic] opera is of best in the world”.

<sup>12</sup> “Nellie outstanding in Janacek [sic] opera”.

Thys Odendaal – *Beeld* 2 August 1976

***Gedenkwaardige hoofstuk in die SA opera***<sup>13</sup>

*En Nellie du Toit. Sy het van Jenufa [sic] 'n veel ryper en sensitiewer mens gemaak as wat 'n mens jou aanvanklik wou voorstel – 'n toonbeeld van haar deurleefde kunstenaarskap. Dit was aangrypend om haar talle gemoedswisselinge te aanskou en te ervaar. In die eerste bedryf het sy na die liefde van Stewa [sic] gesoek en Laca summier verwerp. In die tweede bedryf het sy met 'n teerheid die liefde vir haar seuntjie geïllustreer en in skrilte kontras teenoor haar moeder Kostelnicka [sic] gestaan. Haar laaste duet saam met Gé Korsten as Laca was 'n hartroerende oomblik – daardie byna verwese terugblik in die kamer waar sy soveel leed moes verteer.*

*Jenufa [sic] is nie alleen 'n gedenkwaardige hoofstuk in Truk-Opera se geskiedenis nie, maar gewis ook 'n hoogtepunt vir opera in Suid-Afrika.*

Jozua van der Lugt – *Rapport* 8 August 1976

***Opera laat wens jou 'n ding***<sup>14</sup>

*Nellie du Toit se gelyke is daar nie op die Suid-Afrikaanse opera-verhoog nie: en dit wat stem, vertolkingsvermoë, diepte – sommer alles, betref. Haar Jenufa [sic] bewys dit weer. Soms was die gebare ietwat teatraal vir die aard van Jenufa [sic] en daar was ook 'n geringe glipsie tydens die gebed, maar die geheelindruk was uiters bevredigend. Ek wonder of ons mense genoeg beseef hoeveel hierdie sangeres vir ons werd is?*

Rudolf van Alk – *Oggendblad* 19 July 1976

***Jenufa [sic] is 'n teatergebeurtenis***<sup>15</sup>

*Die keuse van Nellie du Toit vir die titelrol is baie problematies. Jenufa [sic] is, om 'n Duitse vakterm te gebruik, 'n “jugendlich-dramatische” sopraan. Madame du Toit is nóg ‘jugendlich’ (jeugdig) nóg dramaties. Daar is wil, daar is in 'n sekere mate kunde, maar die eenvoudige jeugdige spontaneïteit wat basies tot hierdie rol behoort, ontbreek en daarmee ook die egte ontroering. Haar artikulasiebewe [sic] hinderlik skerp en skel deur 'n te breë mondstand – dis dieselfde outydse sangtegniek wat Gé Korsten so onkant vang.*

*Haar artikulasiebewegings is oordrewe, veral met die onderkaak maar die artikulasie self is nouliks voldoende. Ook is haar stem nie groot genoeg om met gemak en ongedwongenheid die dramatiese hoogtepunte te verwesenlik nie. Bowendien lyk sy ouer as haar stiefmoeder. Toeka se dae is mos verby toe Melba op ruim 60-jarige leeftyd nog Mimi [sic] gesing het.*

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<sup>13</sup> “Memorable chapter in SA opera”.

<sup>14</sup> “Opera makes you wish something”.

<sup>15</sup> “Jenufa [sic] is a theatrical happening”.

## 1977 – CAPAB – *La Traviata*

Pieter Kooij – *Die Burger* 17 January 1977

### *La Traviata* – Regisseur Fiasconaro laat opera leef<sup>16</sup>

*In hierdie speelvak vertolk Nellie du Toit die baie veeleisende hoofrol. Die moeilike koloratuur-passasies in die eerste bedryf vereis 'n baie soepel stem wat sterk in kontras staan met die legato-lyne van die laaste drie bedrywe. Sedert mej. Du Toit se steeds onvergeetlike Lucia di Lammermoor van etlike jare gelede toe sy die moeilike koloratuur-passasies met die grootste skynbare gemak hanteer het, het haar stem intussen donkerder, dramatiser [sic], maar ook enigsins minder soepel geword.*

*Saterdagavond was haar eerste bedryf gevolglik verreweg nie so geslaagd soos die ander bedrywe nie. Veral in die tweede bedryf het haar pragtige sagte sang, afgewissel deur dramatiese gedeeltes met 'n opwindende sterk volume my baie geïmponeer.*

Unidentified author (1977a)

### *Verkoue hou Nellie nie uit rol*<sup>17</sup>

*Ondanks 'n verkoue het die sopraan Nellie du Toit verlede Saterdagavond 'n groot sukses by die Nico-Malanskouburg behaal toe sy die eerste keer die rol van Violetta in La Traviata [sic] in die Kaap gesing het. Nellie kon nie haar verkoue betyds voor die première van die Verdi-opera afskud nie, en die eerste bedryf was nie die beste wat sy nog van La Traviata [sic] gesing het nie. In die koloraturredeltes van 'Sempre libera' was sy glad nie by [sic] goeie stem nie.*

*In die daaropvolgende drie bedrywe het sy egter vergoed met sommige van die mees dramatiese sang wat nog in die Kaap gehoor is. Haar stem is nou donkerder as toe sy haar laaste groot Kaapse sukses – Lucia di Lammermoor – gesing het, en haar toneelspel deurgaans oortuigend. Die tragiese einde van die opera was sekerlik die hoogtepunt van die aanbieding. Kaapse kritici het dié toneel as “ontroerend” beskryf.*

## 1977 – CAPAB – *Otello*

Pieter Kooij – *Die Burger* May 1977

### *Baie goeie 'Otello' in Nico*<sup>18</sup>

*Ofskoon daar diegene is wat Nellie du Toit se stemklank kil vind, is haar algehele professionalisme so opvallend, haar stemgebruik so uitmuntend, haar toneelspel so oortuigend en haar verhoogvoorkoms so aantreklik dat selfs die mees kritiese luisteraar deur haar geïmponeer [sic] word. Mej. Du Toit se vertolking in die laaste bedryf was ongetwyfeld 'n sege. Haar sagte sang, afgewissel deur sterk uitbarstings, was baie opwindend en het my by tye werklik ontroer.*

<sup>16</sup> “La Traviata – Producer Fiasconaro revives opera”.

<sup>17</sup> “Cold does not keep Nellie from role”.

<sup>18</sup> “Very good ‘Otello’ in Nico”.

## 1978 – PACT – *Die Fledermaus*

Thys Odendaal – *Beeld* 18 March 1978

### *Spel en musiek klop nie*<sup>19</sup>

*TRUK-OPERA se herproduksie van Die Fledermaus in Afrikaans is in een opsig hoogs geslaag, maar andersins onbevredigend. Neels Hansen se regie is direk, innemend beplan en duidelik met sorg aangepak. Die stuk beweeg vinnig voort, wat met die komiese gegewe natuurlik 'n belangrike vereiste is. Kortom, daar is 'n deurlopende vloei van kostelike situasies.*

*Maar die spelleiding klop nie altyd met die musiekregie nie. As jy 'n opera vertaal, is dit onvermydelik dat die musikale waarde sal taan: al het jy ook die beste sangers en die beste dirigent. Die Britse dirigent Terence Kern het goed gevaar as ondersteunende party, maar in sy leiding het min van die werklike Weense Schmaltz oorgekom. Dit was dus die onversoenbaarheid van die twee aspekte wat gehinder het: soos 'n sanger met 'n lae- en hoë-, maar geen middelregister nie. Die breë konsep van die produksie neig dan soms te maklik na die musiekspel. Teen Kern het ek nie beswaar nie, maar waarom 'n Britse dirigent nooit om 'n Afrikaanse aanbieding te lei?*

*Nellie du Toit se Rosalinde was in die geheel gesien bevredigend. Dit is jammer dat haar stem (wat sou verkeerd wees?) nie deurgaans haar oortuigende toneelspel gekompleteer het nie. Sy het 'n aangename aanvoeling vir die komiese. Afgesien van die Tzardas [sic] is Rosalinde nie 'n moeilike sangrol nie en dit het my verbaas dat mej. Du Toit so kwaai op haar sangtegniek moes steun om haar die aand deur te sien.*

[...] *Ná die Johannesburgse speelvak kan Truk gerus die produksie vir 'n jaar of vyf wegbêre.*

Thys Odendaal – *Beeld* 3 April 1978

### *'n Laagtepunt vir Nellie du Toit*<sup>20</sup>

*TRUK se voorstelling van Die Fledermaus Vrydagaand in Johannesburg was 'n teleurstellende affêre. Die aanbieding het misluk grootliks omdat Nellie du Toit in die rol van Rosalinde 'n laagtepunt in haar loopbaan bereik het; omdat Gé Korsten miskien nie te sleg sing nie, maar soos gewoonlik hopeloos toneelspeel; omdat die dirigent Terence Kern, nie die vaagste benul het van die Weense Schmaltz nie en dit aan die orkes en verhoog oordra; omdat dit in Afrikaans aangebied word wat die aantreklikheid van die operette-genre totaal versmoor; omdat die sang en spel van die meeste van die ander sangers – behalwe Barbara Veenemans – by enkele geleenthede platvloers aandoen; omdat...*

*Dat daar hoegenaamd in Vrydagaand se aanbieding opflikkeringe was, kan toegeskryf word aan die deeglike regie-werk van Neels Hansen, en die aandeel van Barbara Veenemans en Tobie Cronjé. Mej. Veenemans en Cronjé is nie die ideale Adèle [sic] en Frosch nie, maar dan is 'n vertaalde weergawe van Die Fledermaus nie die ideale manier om hierdie operette aan te bied nie. In die omstandighede slaag mej. Veenemans en Cronjé egter die beste, hoewel 'n mens huiwer om te dink hoe hulle sal lyk en klink as hulle dieselfde aanslag in die oorspronklike Duits sou gebruik.*

*Maar die ontstellendste van die hele produksie bly mej. Du Toit se huidige vorm. Die rol van Rosalinde is op die Tsardas [sic] na baie mak. Mej. Du Toit se Tsardas [sic] was katastrofaal, terwyl sy in die res ook maar bitter benoud geklink het.*

<sup>19</sup> "Acting and music don't match".

<sup>20</sup> "Nadir for Nellie du Toit".

*’n Mens kan haar as Rosalinde skaars vereenselwig met die voortreflike Jenufa [sic] waarmee sy in die tweede helfte van 1976 soveel roem ingeoes het. Daar is ernstig fout met haar stem – dis duidelik. Sy sal dit moet laat rus of dis die einde van ’n besondere loopbaan, en dit sou ’n mens nie graag nou wil sien nie.*

### **1979 – NAPAC – La Traviata**

Henning Viljoen – *Die Vaderland* 17 July 1979

#### ***La Traviata het ’n sterker hand nodig***<sup>21</sup>

*As Violetta het Nellie du Toit ná ’n ietwat versigtige eerste bedryf veral in die tweede en finale bedryf met sang en spel na vore gekom wat baie moeilik op van selfs die grootste operaverhoë van die wêreld geëwenaar kan word.*

*Haar groot krag as ’n singende aktrise het sy geopenbaar deur Dite alla giovine te omskep tot ’n roerende monoloog van verlatenheid waardeur Germont vervaag het en ’n mens net bewus geword het van die opofferende liefde en lot van die vrou. ’n Aangrypende slot en sterfoneel kan baie moeilik voorgestel word. Ondanks die glans wat enkele hoë note ingeboet het, beheers mej. Du Toit die rol vokaal ten volle meesterlik en haar piano-sang was ongelooflik mooi en roerend.*

Aart de Villiers – *Die Transvaler* 19 July 1979

#### ***Naruk-stuk heel voortreflik***<sup>22</sup>

*Kenners sou miskien hier en daar fout te vind hê met ’n enkele hoë noot. Maar hulle sou almal moet saamstem dat haar vertolking een van die opregstes en roerendstes was wat hierdie rol nog beleef het. Daar was passasie op passasie van werklike groot skoonheid – veral in die treffende vierde bedryf.*

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<sup>21</sup> “La Traviata needs a stronger hand”.

<sup>22</sup> “NAPAC-piece first-rate”.

*APPENDIX XII*

**PHOTOGRAPHS DEPICTING NELLIE DU TOIT**



NELLIE DU TOIT – SOPRANO – in the early sixties

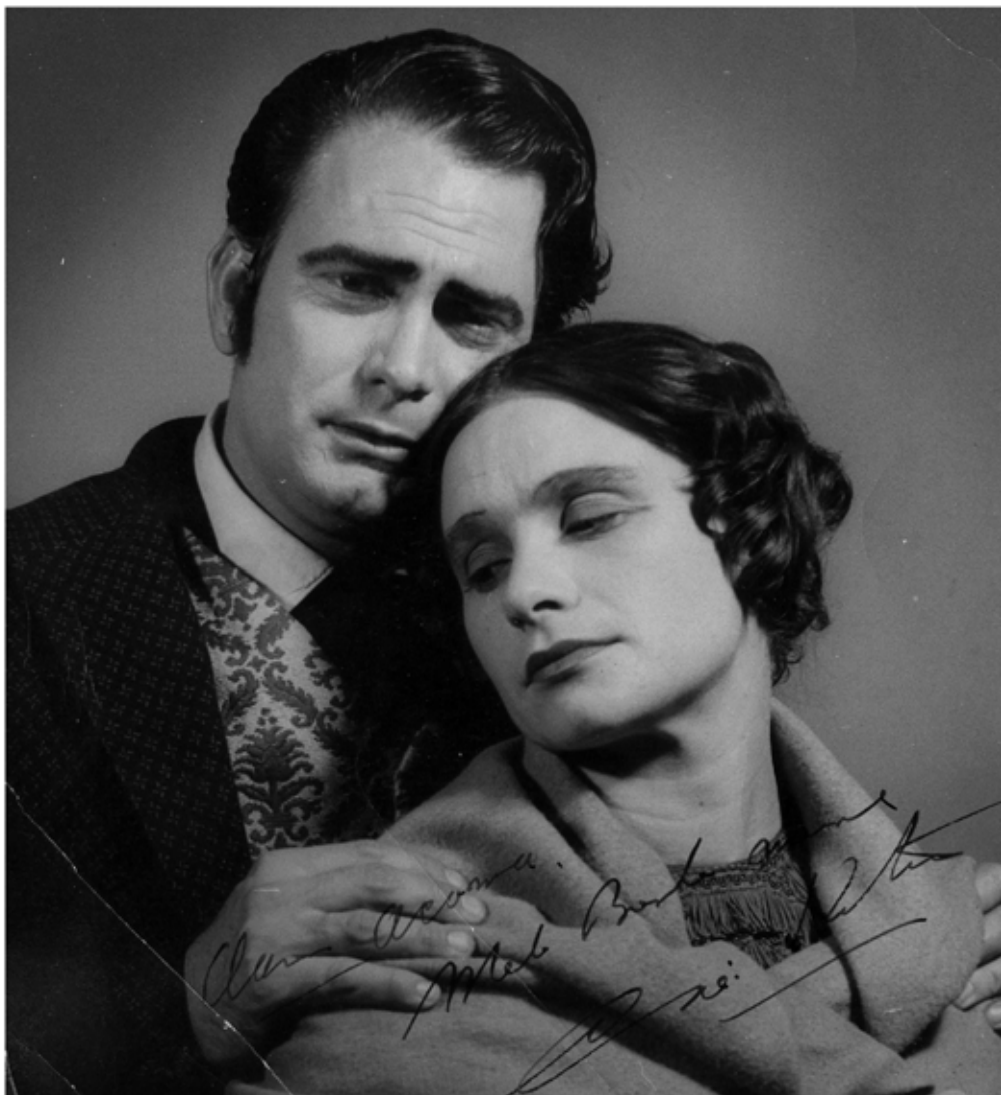
*(Dotman Pretorius Studio of Photography)  
(Nellie du Toit private collection)*





AFRIKAANS EISTEDDFOD, PRETORIA  
Afrikaans Girls' High School Senior Choir under Nellie du Toit, 1958.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Acáma Fick private collection)*



GÉ KORSTEN and NELLIE DU TOIT  
as Rodolfo and Mimì in Puccini's *La Bohème*,  
the first opera production in which they sang together, staged by die South African Opera Federation,  
Johannesburg, 1959.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Acáma Fick private collection)*



XANDER HAAGEN and NELLIE DU TOIT, as Graf von Eberbach and Baronin Freimann  
in Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (*Die Wilddief*),  
the last opera production by the Pretoria Opera Group, 1963.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Sabina Mossolow private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT singing the “Brindisi” from Verdi’s *La traviata* in the film “Hoor my Lied”, 1968.

(Photograph: Cavalier Films Ltd.)  
(Nellie du Toit private collection)



NELLIE DU TOIT as Musetta in the 1969 CAPAB production of Puccini's *La bohème*.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT as Lucia in 1969 CAPAB production of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*





NELLIE DU TOIT as Cio-Cio-San  
in the 1973 NAPAC production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

*(Programme cover)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT as Madeleine  
in the 1974 NAPAC production of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*.

*(Photograph: Bird & Leeney, Durban)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*





NELLIE DU TOIT as Jenůfa  
in the 1976 PACT production of Janáček's *Jenůfa*.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT as Marguerite  
in the 1976 NAPAC production of Gounod's *Faust*.

*(Photograph: Bird & Leeney, Durban)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



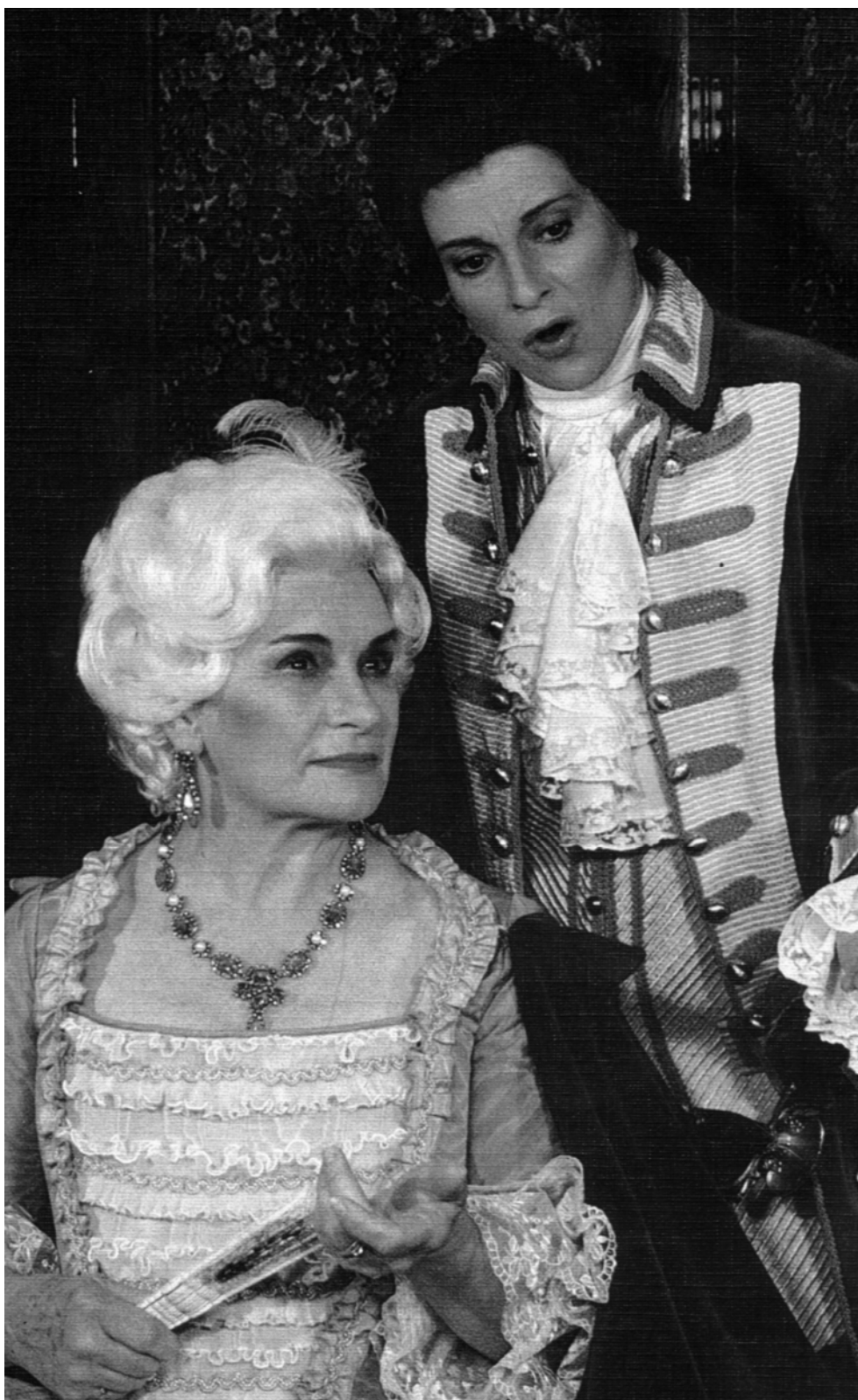
NELLIE DU TOIT as Violetta  
in the 1977 CAPAB production of *La Traviata*.

*(Photographer not stated)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT as Violetta  
in the 1979 NAPAC production of *La traviata*,  
the last opera she sang for for the Arts Councils before embarking on her  
academic career as senior lecturer in singing.

*(Photograph: David Leeney)*  
*(Nellie du Toit private collection)*



NELLIE DU TOIT as Marschallin and SALLY PRESANT as Octavian  
in the 1986 CAPAB production of *Der Rosenkavalier*,  
the role in which Du Toit bade the opera stage farewell.

*(Cover photo: "Scenaria" No. 69, October 1986)*



NELLIE DU TOIT contemplating her certificate stating the award of the Medal of Honour by the South African Academy of Arts and Sciences on 30 September 1986.

*(Photograph: Sabina Mossolow)*  
*(Sabina Mossolow private collection)*



DR NELLIE DU TOIT in the company of her husband, Philip Crouse, after the Honorary Doctorate in Music was conferred on her by the Stellenbosch University on 8 December 1998.

*(Photograph: Anton Jordaan)*  
*(Sabina Mossolow private collection)*