

For Release: 3 February 2026

Opera, te reo combine to honour Māori economy at Waitangi

A highly respected New Zealand opera singer, who works at ANZ NZ in Christchurch as a service consultant, will perform a unique version of a famous aria at a Waitangi event celebrating the Māori economy.

Andrew Grenon will sing a duet with Rotorua-based mezzo-soprano Elisha Fa'i So'oialo, performing a version of Nessun Dorma which has been fully translated into te reo Māori.

The Puccini aria was translated for the event by Kawiti Waetford, an internationally trained and recognised operatic baritone who is fluent in te reo Māori and mentored by Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Kawiti hails from Te Tai Tokerau and is Strategic Māori Lead for New Zealand Opera.

Grenon and Fa'i So'oialo will sing the duet at a dinner event hosted by the Waitangi National Trust and Global Women of the North on Wednesday, February 4. ANZ NZ is the principal sponsor of the event, which is being presented by former Prime Minister Rt Hon Dame Jenny Shipley and Chair of the Waitangi National Trust Tania Simpson.

Grenon says the performance will combine the worlds of opera and te ao Māori in a way that celebrates the renaissance of te reo Māori.

“We had to think deeply about what we can do in terms of the important role we have in the protection of te reo Māori as a taonga of our nation of Aotearoa New Zealand. And how we present this to the world through opera.

“I think bringing it into as many art forms as possible, including the one that I know and love as an important part of it. It's high art.”

Grenon, who is Pākehā, said te reo Māori was a natural fit for opera.

“It's a beautiful language and it's much better for singing than English is.

“It's more like Italian than English, in terms of its vowels. And Italian is an ideal singing language because there's so few interruptions to the sound,” Grenon says.

He is also helping with a distinctive arrangement for the performance.

“It will be written more like a duet than an aria or solo song.

“That's how we're making this a special and unique performance for this event.

“I think this celebrates te reo Māori in an appropriate way while being a high-level operatic performance.”

Wednesday's event is a celebration and acknowledgement of the Māori economy. The report released last year by Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment & BERL reported that the Māori asset base has grown from \$69 billion in 2018 to \$126 billion in 2023 and contributes 8.9% to GDP.

Data from ANZ NZ shows that iwi and hapu-owned commercial entities emerged from the economic downturn in good shape, performing better - on a return on assets basis - than many of Aotearoa largest listed companies.

The Waitangi National Trust's resident kapahaka rōpū, Te Pito Whenua, will also perform during the evening for guests which include iwi and hapū leaders and Māori and non-Māori business leaders.

Karleen Everitt, ANZ NZ's Head of Te Ao Māori Strategy, said the Waitangi operatic performance is a homage to Waitangi and reflects ANZ's kaupapa to promote and protect te reo Māori as it implements its Te Ao Māori Strategy Tākiri-Ā-Rangi 2040.

“This performance ties together the worlds of Māori and opera and shows the power of te reo to connect cultures and people. And in doing so, reflects the distinct qualities that make the Māori economy so exceptional. It serves to highlight the unique journey, strengths and achievements that set the Māori economy apart.

“My tupuna saw beyond the horizons, the coming together of cultures and people where we could all thrive together. It’s an important message to reflect on as we gather in Waitangi and look to the future of Aotearoa New Zealand.”

For media enquiries contact:

David Rowe
External Communications Manager
Tel: +64 21 221 6625