

**Wedding speech by Dr Roderick Deane in proposing a toast to the bride and groom, Sandra Martinovich and Jonathan Lemalu, on the occasion of their wedding in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 19 August 2006.**

The beautiful and glamorous bride, Sandra;  
The handsome and powerful groom, Jonathan;  
The Martinovich family;  
Lemalu-nanai;  
Our venerable Master of Ceremonies, Ian Fraser;  
Friends from far and wide....

The rehearsals are over.  
This is the opera we have been waiting for.  
We have a glittering cast and a triumphant theme.  
But it could equally be a fairy tale.

The stories of two families in far away places have remarkable similarities.  
The story started three decades ago.

This gorgeous little girl in Bosnia fell in love with singing  
and was prepared to devote her life to it  
with talent and diligence and determination.

Her Father Slavko realized he had to resolve matters.  
So he asked the music school to audition this young girl thinking that this  
may be the end of it.  
But it was not to be, for the girl rose at 4am every Saturday, travelled for  
many hours alone to have her music lessons and arrived home late in the  
afternoon. After a year, every Saturday for a year, the test was met. Not a  
single complaint had been heard.

The young girl grew more beautiful and finally graduated with distinction  
from the Music Conservatoire. All of this was accomplished by  
simultaneously working full time in the Croatian National Television Choir.

This young girl's great courage and faith in the value of building her talents  
is signified by the amazing courage of her family. That courage, Ladies and  
Gentlemen, was stunningly exemplified to me by the way in which they  
escaped from Bosnia across a bridge at noon on the same day it was blown  
up in the war that evening. And so a new beginning had to be made.

In a far off land at the other end of the world, this young man of Samoan origin but proudly New Zealand was playing rugby football and singing in choirs. When he was a choral singer his Grandmother would say “I think he is going to be a singer.” ( When I first heard him sing in our shower, I must say I thought the same.)

But his Mother’s Father was a Land Court Judge and his Father was a Matai, a distinguished elder in the Samoan Community. So he decided to become a lawyer. He still played rugby. But he could not stop singing, for which he attributes much of the blame to his wonderful singing teacher Honor McKellar who is with us today.

Gillian and I met this young man when he was agonizing over a choice between the law and music. Gillian told him she thought there was no choice! This was to earn her the title of Godmother.

As in all good fairytales time moved on.  
Both the young girl and the young man migrated to the Royal College of Music in London.

For her it was a high quality post graduate diploma in voice performance. She made friends easily with the benefit of the great love of family, an easy and charming sense of humour, an abiding interest in others, and that wonderful underlying strength of character and determination. It is easy to be beguiled by her, as many of us have discovered. She is, as Jonathan rapidly realized, rather gorgeous.

For him, the Royal College facilitated more glittering prizes, a list too long to repeat today, but of more importance, through all the excitement of winning so many competitions and earning so many leading operatic roles with the best opera companies in the world, this young man of ours, just like the young girl, retained his depth of humanity, his warmth and graciousness, and his strength and inclusiveness for family and friends.

But none of the prizes he has won in this stunning career could match the glittering prize he has achieved today. No wonder he is so pleased with himself.

How did this happen the story teller may ask ?

Our young girl was so talented that she was to go on to train in the Alexander technique, a course she commenced on 15 September, 2003.

By a splendid coincidence, one befitting an opera or a fairy tale, our young man on that very day received the Queen Elizabeth Rose Bowl from Prince Charles, having some months earlier graduated as the top student of the Royal College with its pre-eminent Gold Medal.

That day they met again and, happily for someone like me who has been Chairman of a telephone company, exchanged phone numbers.

He said, "I'm going to call you!"

He did – that night.

Our story moves on per courtesy of texting.

Where did they first go out on a proper date? To Covent Garden, no less, where he was performing.

Given the strong and warm families from which they came; and given their shared family values; their love of music; the great good humour; a shared formidable ability not only to work hard but also to enjoy life; the gifts of love and friendship, it is perhaps no surprise that this fairytale turned out to be love ever after.

And that is why we are all here today, to share in Sandra and Jonathan's joy in being married; to pay tribute to them and their families; and to wish them love and happiness in their lives ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen I invite you to rise and join me in a toast to the Bride and Groom.