I have been planning to write about this lady for a long time. I have resolved on doing it now, because she sings carols beautifully.

Kiri Te Kanawa was born on 5 March 1944 in Gisborne, New Zealand. Her original name was Claire Rawstron. Her father was Maori and her mother was European, but there is little known about them. It is said that her father was a Maori aristocrat. As an infant she was adopted by Thomas Te Kanawa, a Maori, and his Irish wife Nell. Her musical talent revealed itself very early in her life. She performed publically when she was 6 years old.

Christmas with Kiri Te Kanawa

She was a student of Saint Mary's College in Auckland. There was an well-functioning orchestra and a choir in the school, led by **Sister Mary Leo**. She was a gifted teacher, since several of her students went on to become great singers. At school Kiri began as a mezzo-soprano and only several years later she developed into a soprano. It wasn't exclusively classical music she sang after co/mpleting her education. It was actually mainly pop music. She sang in clubs in different cities of New Zealand and by the time she turned 20 she had already got a large crowd of fans all over the country.

The breakthrough came in 1965. Kiri Te Kanawa took part in Mobil Song Quest competition, where she sang *Vissi d'arte* from Puccini's "Tosca". She was an uncontested winner. As a prize she was offered scholarship in London. In 1966 she began to study at London Opera Centre and was tutored by Vera Rozsa and James Robertson.They both agreed that although Kiri's technique needed some polishing, her voice charmed the listeners from the start.

The first public appearance on stage took place in 1968 in Sadler's Wells Theatre. She sang there several times Mozart, Haendel and Donizetti. The following year she took part in Camden Festival, singing an aria from Mozart's *Idomeneo*. The result of this performance was a three-year contract with Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Colin Davies, a famous conductor, led the orchestra when Kiri auditioned for the role of role of the Countess in The Marriage of Figaro. This is what he had to say about her singing: '
I couldn't believe my ears. I've taken thousands of auditions, but it was such a fantastically beautiful voice
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