

## Robert Wiremu: Presenter - The Wiremu Vowel Clock



Robert Wiremu (Kahungunu and Tūwharetoa) is a musician with a breadth of range and abilities. Growing up in a musical family, he was exposed early to church music, spontaneous family singing, and kapa haka. He then formalised his studies in western classical music at Victoria University of Wellington, the University of Auckland, and The Queensland Conservatorium of Music. In 1998, Robert returned to the University of Auckland to a faculty position, over the years teaching thousands of musicologists, singers (both solo and choral), chamber ensembles, collaborative pianists, conductors, and composers. Now he is teaching the students of those former students, and the beginnings of a third generation. As an experienced baritone chorister, soloist and recording artist with all the national choirs, Robert is now in considerable demand as a teacher, repertoire coach, vocal consultant, clinician, adjudicator and artistic advisor.

Robert has collaborated with many of Aotearoa's most distinguished artists, including the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, the New Zealand String Quartet, Dames Kiri Te Kanawa, Malvina Major, and Gillian Whitehead, Sir Howard Morrison, Drs Karen Grylls and Simon O'Neill, and artist Professor Michael Parekōwhai. As a pedagogue, he is very interested in language to facilitate good storytelling via meaning and function, creating the Wiremu Vowel Clock as an alternate diction tool.

As a composer/arranger, Robert has a particular interest in connecting Māori stories/New Zealand stories with the classical stage, particularly -though not exclusively- through Opera in the Pā (2008-16), as artistic advisor for Choirs Aotearoa NZ (2019-), and in his governance board role with the New Zealand Choral Federation, and as a trustee for the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation. Whether performing, teaching, or writing, Robert is an advocate for storytelling.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFdlidcgrYc>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mti7\\_FTT0Dg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mti7_FTT0Dg)

### The Wiremu Vowel Clock

As an alternative to the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is a system of symbols (glyphs) that represent specific sounds (phonemes), Robert created the Wiremu Vowel Clock. It is a system that allows for quicker communication between ensembles/soloists and conductors/coaches about vowel matching, in any language. It was a response to the complexity of discussing vowels using IPA, which is less specific. If tuning for choirs is both about the placement of a pitch plus the alignment of the vowel (and its endemic harmonic structure) then we must find a way to better communicate and understand vowels. It's an ongoing exploration...