
Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

Die Walküre

Gothenburg Opera (November 2019)

"The continuation of Stephen Langridge's Gothenburg Ring cycle has been eagerly awaited. Though the same scenic 'kit' is used for all four operas, the visual presentation is adapted for each episode of the drama. At a seminar before the premiere, Langridge and Alison Chitty revealed more of their plan for the cycle. While *Das Rheingold* was set in a timeless 'once upon a time', *Die Walküre* is set 'yesterday' (i.e. the previous generation), with Siegfried set 'today' and *Götterdämmerung* 'tomorrow' – when the next generation will (hopefully) repair the crimes against nature perpetrated by previous generations. Though there are still some visual links to *Das Rheingold*, in *Die Walküre* the Ring and the unbalancing of nature caused by Wotan and Alberich recede into the background, and relationships take centre stage...Chitty and Fabrice Serafino's costumes and stage props have a suggestion of Seventies style, in particular in Hunding's house and Sieglinde's sensible house clothes."

- Niklas Smith, *Seenandheard-international.com*

"Gothenburg Opera, who are devoted completely to the eco-friendly direction of their activities, continued their Ring cycle with "Die Walküre" in a sleek and functional stage design by Alison Chitty." - Klaus Billand, *Opera Online*

"The contrast between [Alison Chitty's] grey costumes and stage and the enchanted fire around the valkyrie cliff at the end is all the more effective." - Lennart Bromander, *Aftonbladet*

Das Rheingold

Gothenburg Opera (November 2018)

"Alison Chitty's designs bore her signature tidy refinement." - Andrew Mellor, *Opera News.com*

"This Gothenburg Ring proclaims its "green" credentials not only in the tilt of the direction and design – by Langridge's frequent collaborator, Alison Chitty – but in the material conditions of the production and its home...A sustainable production can yield surprise benefits: for instance, the acoustic properties of the recycled wood used to make the sets. Alison Chitty has transformed a motley array of second-hand costumes into "a world that makes sense". Yet, for all its stringent economy, this *Rheingold* does not feel particularly minimalist. Langridge says about his collaborations with Chitty that they "always try to engage the imagination of the public. Both of us would say that you don't do that by giving them everything... The natural storytelling style of myself and Alison is in many ways economical and spare". Our imaginations must make the Rhine, Nibelheim and Valhalla spring to life."

- Boyd Tonkin, *The Arts Desk*

"Revelatory...Alison Chitty's set is made of recycled wood, with three walls that look plain under white light but otherwise take Paul Pyant's lighting beautifully. Clever rotation of set elements on turntables and imaginative lighting turn the same room from a watery Rhine to the shining realm of the Gods and to a nightmarish Nibelheim. My most vivid visual memories of the production are all to do with the story: the torture of the child representing the Rhinegold in Nibelheim; the rainbow of plastic waste where the discarded Rhinegold was lying among the yellows while the complacent gods ascended to Valhalla; and the endless procession of extras flowing like (and representing) the waters of the Rhine in the opening scene."

- Niklas Smith, *Seenandheard-international.com*

Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

The Cure & The Corridor Holland Festival (2016)

“The austere but very effective backdrop of Alison Chitty.” – **Henri Drost, Theaterkrant**

Theodora Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (October 2015)

“Alison Chitty’s scenography is judicious and evocative” - **Chantal Cazaux, L’Avant-Scène Opéra**

“...ingenius minimalist scenes...” - **Olivier Brunel, Concerto.net**

“Ainsi, la mise en scène, bien aidée des décors, costumes et lumières d’Alison Chitty et Fabrice Kabour, enchaîne les tableaux d’une esthétique envoûtante et les scènes fortes.” – **Damien Dutilleul, Olyrix**

The Cure & The Corridor Aldeburgh Festival, Linbury Theatre (June 2015)

“Alison Chitty’s designs use colour and symbol to powerful effect.” – **Richard Fairman, The Financial Times ******

“Martin Duncan’s production, with simply effective designs by Alison Chitty, is beautifully nuanced.” – **Andrew Clements, The Guardian ******

“Alison Chitty’s designs with Paul Pyant’s lighting conferred intense dramatic power on key moments, most notable Padmore’s spooky transformation from Jason into his father.” – **Michael Church, The Independent *****

“All praise... to Alison Chitty for a rigorously economical but sparsely beautiful staging.” – **Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph ******

“Directed by Martin Duncan, with a brilliant abstract design by Alison Chitty lit by Paul Pyant, this double bill had further performances at the ROH Linbury Studio.” - **Fiona Maddocks, The Observer *******

“Every contrast and similarity is clearly and simply drawn.” – **David Allen, The New York Times**

“Alison Chitty’s abstract sets were genius throughout.” – **Igor Toronyi-Lalic, The Spectator**

Pirates of Penzance English National Opera (May 2015)

“The designer Alison Chitty [dresses] the chorus as impeccable Victorian maidens, ploddy policeman and picture-book pirates... The action is framed within circles and other abstract geometric shapes, with location suggested purely by colour and an array of beautifully drawn Cornish birds.” – **Richard Morrison, The Times ******

Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

"Visually, however, it's a show that plays to the back of the house, setting the bustles-and-boaters detail of Victorian costumes against designer Alison Chitty's zany geometric architecture. Bold swathes of primary colours frame naturalism with contemporary abstraction, taking the edge off any period fussiness with their clean lines, and generating a wonderfully witty effect for the Act II finale, in which pirates, policemen and assorted unmarried Wards of Chancery all stumble upon one another." – **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Spectator***

"The silliness of the plot is enhanced by the intense pigments of Alison Chitty's simple but sophisticated designs, near abstract but with just enough suggestive detail." – **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

"Alison Chitty's colourful costumes are immaculately late-Victorian and look marvellous." – **George Hall, *The Stage* *******

"The trendily minimalist set designs by Alison Chitty suggest we are looking through an onshore telescope at the pirates' ship." – **Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times***

"It is conventionally stages in 19th-century costume much as the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company would have envisioned – with the token modernism of a streamlined, semi-abstract set by Alison Chitty." – **Michael White, *The New York Times***

"Alison Chitty's fluorescent designs for this production suggest the opening and closing of a camera shutter, and the ship which disgorges the pirates is bandbox-dainty." – **Michael Church, *The Independent* ******

Parsifal

Royal Opera House (November 2013)

"The triumph of this new interpretation, directed by Stephen Langridge and designed by Alison Chitty, is that it de-sanctifies Parsifal : all trace of pseudo-sacred mumbo-jumbo is removed. What we get instead is a visual shorthand, contemporary but timeless, that illuminates the opera's philosophical complexity while keeping the narrative both straightforward and continually mesmerising. Across a five-hour span, that is no mean feat..." – **Andrew Clark, *Financial Times* *******

"Alison Chitty's angular sets, lit by Paul Pyant, and the grey-suited knights evoke an alienating, militaristic society." – **Barry Millington, *Evening Standard* ******

Nabucco

Royal Opera House (March 2013)

"Alessandro Carletti's lighting bathes Alison Chitty's austere set of grey plinths in the pale wash of dawn, the glare of noon, the softening of dusk and the long shadows of a moonlit night.

"Chitty's plinths display a wider dramatic range than the principals, channeling the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, tombs on the Mount of Olives, the tight alleys of the Lodz ghetto and the gas chambers." – **Anna Picard, *The Independent***

"Designed by Alison Chitty...some of its broader visual references - exiled 20th century groups, including Jewish refugees from the Nazi period, and Daniel Liebeskind's Holocaust Memorial in Berlin - remain indelibly eloquent." – **George Hall, *The Stage***

Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

“Alison Chitty’s designs seek to establish a connection between biblical banishment and 20th-century oppression, specifically the Nazi persecution of the Jews; and, the modern business suits by implication also suggest the miseries of present-day mass exile... With a nod to the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, the sandpit-stage is strewn with statuesque stone plinths representing the Jerusalem Temple; in Alessandro Carletti’s half-light they evoke the eerie strangeness of a de Chirico public square when first viewed, and subsequently they become stumbling blocks to meaningful stage movement.” – **Claire Seymour, *Opera Today***

“The details of Alison Chitty’s designs have a real abstract elegance.” – **Planet Hugill**

The Minotaur - Revival

Royal Opera House – Revival (January 2013)

“Designer Alison Chitty’s sets had a rugged simplicity which sat perfectly with Birtwistle’s vision, creating a part-virtual bull-ring in which this subversively appealing creature could kill, dream, lament and finally be killed.” – **Michael Church, *The Independent***

“Stephen Langridge’s production is stylish, playing out in the wan sunlight and oppressive darkness of Alison Chitty’s set.” – **Erica Jeal, *The Guardian* *******

“Alison Chitty’s bullring-inspired designs stamp their indelible mark on Birtwistle’s mythical landscape, a place of fear and beauty.” – **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

A Provincial Life

Sherman Cymru, Cardiff

“Yet in Alison Chitty’s beautiful bare and open design the play moves with a marvellous freedom: scythers walk in rhythm across a field; families cluster miserably around a stove; the sense of small episodes in a massive space has rarely been so powerfully summoned.” – **Susannah Clapp, *The Observer***

“a series of sparely but handsomely evoked locations on Alison Chitty’s almost abstract blonde-wood set.” – **Paul Taylor, *The Independent***

“Against Alison Chitty’s blank-canvas design – vast floor-to-ceiling panels of bleached wood – scenes are full of exquisite detail, marking the class and status of the households. Furnishings are swept in during dynamic, extended scene changes featuring Terry Davies’s stirring music. These, and haunting moments such as a line of men scything crops or the tableau-vivant that ends the first act, are the pulse of the production, contrasting with static scenes at dinner tables with endless cups of tea from samovars.” – **Elizabeth Mahoney, *The Guardian***

“designer Alison Chitty’s meticulous visual naturalism (replete with samovars and stoves)...framing Chitty’s authentic foreground scenes are a series of shifting wall panels that alternately open up and embrace the action, staging it with calculated self-consciousness.” – **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Art’s Desk***

“Shaw adeptly portrays Misail’s trajectory from sweetly naive idealism through to a solemn awareness of futility and injustice once his love leaves him. His struggle is emphasised by Alison Chitty’s starkly authentic sets where the characters are dwarfed against the pale wooden backdrops.” – **Susie Wild, *The Stage***

Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

Ecstasy (Mike Leigh) **Hampstead Theatre**

"Alison Chitty's design is cramped and perfect: Baby Belling cooker, candle in a milk bottle, single-bar electric fire." - **Susannah Clapp, *Observer***

"Loneliness and blighted hope seem to waft like a dismal whiff of damp from the cramped Kilburn bedsit that is evoked in all its forlorn frowstiness by Alison Chitty's excellent design." - **Paul Taylor, *Independent***

"realised in wonderful detail on Alison Chitty's set" - **Sarah Hemming, *Financial Times***

"the production proves intimate and absorbing" - **Henry Hitchings, *Evening Standard***

"the actors are cooped and cramped in a tiny section of the stage; the crappy 1950s furniture takes equal billing with the actors

as chief protagonists.... As is the desperation and emptiness of working lives, perfectly summed by Alison Chitty's set, where the dead flowers on the telly sit next to an empty packet of Roses chocolates." - **Gina Allum, *New Statesman***

"Strikingly, Leigh and Chitty have used only one side of the wide Hampstead stage, and there's an intense realism about the bedsit, and the quiet of the night, the silence between people" - **Michael Coveney, *What's On Stage***

The Minotaur – World Premiere **Royal Opera House (November 2008)**

"designer Alison Chitty has created a bullring-like lair for the Minotaur himself, around which a crowd adds its chanted commentary to the killings. The production is an outstanding achievement..." - **Andrew Clements, *Guardian***

"Alison Chitty's designs, enhanced by projections of the sea, capture the desolateness of the Cretan shore and, with the crowd held back by a simple wooden fence, further the bloodlust atmosphere of the bullfight scenes." - **George Loomis, *International Herald Tribune***

"Stylishly designed by Alison Chitty and directed by Stephen Langridge, the entire show reeks of lavish production values" - **Anthony Holden, *Observer***

"Alison Chitty's elegantly sparse designs" - **Richard Morrison, *The Times***

"cleanly designed by Alison Chitty" - **Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph***

"Langridge's production, beautifully designed by Alison Chitty, is spare and elegant" - **Paul Driver, *Sunday Times***

"to spare yet resonant designs by Alison Chitty" - **George Hall, *The Stage***

Alison Chitty

Selected Reviews

La Forza del Destino

Opera Holland Park

"Neither of London's leading companies, English National Opera or the Royal Opera, has successfully tackled Verdi's most problematic mature opera in the past 30 years, so OHP's achievement is all the more remarkable. The opera's action encompasses six scenes, divided between Spain and Italy. Yet the director, Martin Duncan, and his economical designer, Alison Chitty, make light of the opera's scenographic demands by virtually making do without scenery. A wide, expansive stage and a crumpled black curtain covering the theatre's portico back wall might seem excessively austere for an opera that moves from an aristocratic palace, via an inn and a monastery in Spain, to a battlefield in Italy, then back to the Spanish monastery. Yet in this production, updated to the Spanish civil war, Duncan and Chitty achieve a kind of cinematic fluidity, with each scene "dissolving" thanks to the simple means of the chorus moving furniture — blood-smeared in the war scenes — and a portable crucifix. An opera that can be interminable, with endless changes of set, is here an unusually coherent, dramatically taut and almost Shakespearian drama; the 3 hours speed by." - **Hugh Canning, *Sunday Times***

The Io Passion

Aldeburgh Festival

"...the simple but highly effective set by Alison Chitty" - **Keith Clarke, *Musical America***

"The Io Passion ends up as an intellectual conundrum and it is handsomely served by Alison Chitty's Edward Hooper-ish set" - **Andrew Clark, *Financial Times***

"Over 90 minutes, the same small things happen again and again. Ingeniously and with not little menace, Alison Chitty's set presents these two perspectives simultaneously, one on each side of the stage." - **Nick Kimberley, *Evening Standard***

Two Thousand Years (Mike Leigh)

National Theatre

"Alison Chitty's design, with its Picasso and Matisse prints on the walls, its piled-up DVDs and its Ikea furniture, is as socially and physically accurate as the writing." - **Michael Billington, *The Guardian***