
Christopher Ainslie

Selected Reviews

Ligeti Le Grand Macabre (Prince Go-Go), Semperoper Dresden (November 2019)

"Counter Christopher Ainslie [w]as a wonderfully infantile Prince Go-Go ... [The soloists] master their games as effortlessly as if they were singing Schubertlieder." - Christian Schmidt, Freie Presse

"A multitude of excellent voices [including] countertenor Christopher Ainslie as Prince with pure, blossoming top notes and exaggerated drama ... they are all brilliant performances." - Michael Ernst, neue musikzeitung

"Christopher Ainslie gave a honeyed Prince Go-Go." - Xavier Cester, Ópera Actual

"Christopher Ainslie with his wonderfully extravagant voice." - Thomas Thielemann, IOCO

"Prince Go-Go, is agile and vocally impressive, performed by Christopher Ainslie." - Björn Kühnicke, Musik in Dresden

"Christopher Ainslie lends the ruler his extraordinary countertenor voice." - Jens Daniel Schubert, Sächsische Zeitung

"Christopher Ainslie[s] rounded countertenor, which carried well into that glorious acoustic." - operatraveller.com

Handel Rodelinda (Unulfo), Teatro Municipal, Santiago, Chile (August 2019)

"Christopher Ainslie was a measured Unulfo." - Claudia Ramirez, Culto Latercera

Handel Belshazzar (Cyrus), The Grange Festival (June 2019)

"Christopher Ainslie makes something effective out of the Persian conqueror Cyrus." - George Hall, The Stage

"Counter-tenors James Laing and Christopher Ainslie make their mark as Daniel and Cyrus." - Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph

"Christopher Ainslie's countertenor is beautiful ... he presented the conflicted hero with style." - Melanie Eskenazi, MusicOMH

"Christopher Ainslie was impressive as the Persian leader Cyrus – this was a subtle exploration of heroism, plumbing the character's doubts and fears as well as expounding his triumphs." - Ashutosh Khandekar, Opera Now

"Christopher Ainslie as a benevolent Cyrus dazzles more for his bravura rendition of 'Destructive war, thy limits know' while clinging onto the side of the ziggurat." - David Truslove, OperaToday

"Among the puritanical Persians outside (then inside) the city walls, Christopher Ainslie's Cyrus delivered not a straightforwardly heroic countertenor but a more subdued, lighter and more anguished reading of the part. Frail-sounding at first, he grew in authority and impact, a humane conqueror who "seeks no enemy except the tyrant" but evidently still feels saddled with doubts about his fitness for the victor's job." - Boyd Tonkin, The Arts Desk

"Ainslie's bravura contrasts with Laing's more introverted refinement" - Tim Ashley, The Guardian

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"The two countertenors - Laing and Christopher Ainslie as Cyrus - were more consistent and also a good deal more expressive."
– George Hall, Opera Magazine

"Christopher Ainslie's Cyrus was fascinatingly self-regarding."
– Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill

Handel Rodelinda (Unulfo), Opera de Lyon (December 2018)

"The servant Unulfo, performed by Christopher Ainslie who shows his exuberant loyalty in two enthralling arias, is well cast."
– Barbara Röder, Klassik.com

"The countertenors (Christopher Ainslie as Unulfo) master their breakneck coloraturas with flying colours."
– Derek Weber, KlassikInfo.de

"Christopher Ainslie, with his soft countertenor voice, was a good cast for the faithful Unulfo."
– Walter Nowotny, Online Merker

"The countertenor Christopher Ainslie played the role of Unulfo with a convincing and appropriate stage game for the character. In addition to this, he showed a great vocal clarity, especially in its agility, interpreted with great versatility."
– Maia Steinberg, Sinfónica

"The countertenor Christopher Ainslie is an endearing Unulfo and approached the role with appreciable simplicity"
– Emmanuel Deroeux, Olyrix

"Christopher Ainslie, Unulfo, performs his solo parts in a light voice that reveals an assured line and agile technique."
– Derek Weber, KlassikInfo.de

"Christopher Ainslie is brilliant in his interpretation of Unulfo."
– Carmen S, Le Zèbre

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie beautifully sings the three arias of Unulfo." – Emmanuel Andrieu, ClassiqueNews.com

"Unulfo is very well defended by the countertenor Christopher Ainslie, a timbre of beautiful musicality."
– Emmanuel Andrieu, ConcertoNet.com

Handel Agrippina (Ottone), The Grange Festival (June 2018)

"Christopher Ainslie as Claudius's preferred successor Otho provided the best moment of lyrical grace in his big 3rd Act aria, where for once real feeling silenced the cynical manoeuvring."
– Ivan Hewett, The Telegraph****

"Ainslie does exquisite things with Vaghe Fonti"
– Tim Ashley, The Guardian****

"Counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie's softly-sung Ottone makes a fine foil to counter-tenor Raffaele Pe's Nerone"
– Michael Church, The Independent

"Christopher Ainslie's gentle Ottone"
– Rebecca Franks, The Times****

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"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie's sweetly sung Ottone"

– Clare Colvin, The Express****

"Raffaele Pe a superbly oleaginous Nerone and Christopher Ainslie a sweetly lyrical Ottone – both sing wonderfully, and you can sense the influence of Michael Chance, himself a notable Ottone, in both their phrasing and production of evenly beautiful tone."

– Melanie Eskenazi, MusicOMH*****

Bach St Matthew Passion, Philharmonie Zuidnederland (March 2018)

"Christopher Ainslie clearly showed his sublime technique".

– Maurice Wood, De Limburger****

Britten A Midsummer Night's Dream (Oberon), English National Opera (March 2018)

"Christopher Ainslie's Oberon emerged as the defining vocal role that it is."

– Martin Kettle, The Guardian****

"jealous Oberon Christopher Ainslie is soft-grained and velvety"

– Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph****

"Christopher Ainslie brings an ethereal beauty of tone to Oberon"

– George Hall, The Stage****

"Christopher Ainslie's Oberon is cleanly sung"

– Michael Church, The Independent****

"Christopher Ainslie combined lofty stage presence with a cool, hazy lightness of voice ideal for Oberon."

– Fiona Maddocks, The Guardian

"Christopher Ainslie's mellow countertenor and pensive demeanour are reminiscent of Alfred Deller, Britten's original Oberon."

– Richard Morrison, The Times

"Christopher Ainslie's Oberon, regal even in his emerald-green pyjamas, was carefully and firmly sung"

– Erica Jeal, Opera Magazine

"from countertenor Christopher Ainslie's tangy Oberon"

– Mark Valencia, WhatsOnStage*****

"Christopher Ainslie's Oberon stands out"

– David Mellor, Daily Mail

"Counter tenor Christopher Ainslie is a commanding presence as Oberon."

– Clare Colvin, The Express*****

Bach Weihnachtsoratorium, Les Musiciens du Louvre (December 2017)

"The solos were largely first class ... Christopher Ainslie sang the lullaby of lullabies 'Schlafe, mein Liebster' "

– Judith von Sternburg, Frankfurter Rundschau

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie will be remembered for his aria 'Schlafe, mein Liebster' for a long time"

– Bettina Boyens, Frankfurter Neue Presse

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- "The pinnacle of the piece came in Christopher Ainslie's aria 'Schlafe, mein Liebster' which he sang with clarity"
– Axel Zibulski, Offenbach Post
- "The alto Christopher Ainslie sang with a fine voice"
– Gerhard Hoffmann, Der neue Merkur
- Handel Giulio Cesare (Title role), English Touring Opera (October 2017)
- "Countertenor Christopher Ainslie commands the stage as Caesar"
– George Hall, The Stage****
- "Ainslie, on tremendous form, spins out Handel's lines with exceptional beauty, and his coloratura is immaculate and thrilling."
– Tim Ashley, The Guardian
- "The countertenor elegantly curls his voice around a series of tricky arias"
– Richard Hubert Smith, The Times****
- "In Part II, Christopher Ainslie's Caesar steals the show with a breath-taking aria sequence that he brings off with resounding success"
– George Hall, The Stage
- "The rather elegant countertenor Christopher Ainslie...he has all the notes and strong stage presence"
– Robert Thicknesse, Opera Now
- "The timbres of the countertenors of Christopher Ainslie (Cesare) ... characterised by precision, and combine clarity with a high level of nuance."
– Sam Smith, MusicOMH****
- "Christopher Ainslie made a poised Giulio Cesare, very much in control, the ideal enlightenment ruler ... Ainslie's account of the great arias, such as 'Va tacito' gave us much to enjoy ... at the opening of Act Three, Ainslie gave us a lovely messa di voce"
– Robert HugiII, Planet HugiII
- "first-rate cast including South African countertenor Christopher Ainslie in the title role" – Simon Parkin, Eastern Daily Press
- "Christopher Ainslie is exceptional as Caesar, and his countertenor truly thrilling."
– Buxton Advertiser
- Handel Semele (Athamas), Garsington Opera (June 2017)
- "With fine contributions from Christopher Ainslie (Athamas) ... this was a splendidly sung performance."
– Barry Millington, Evening Standard ****
- "One of today's top countertenors, Christopher Ainslie, was wasted in the secondary role of Athamas."
– Mark Valencia, What's On Stage ****
- "The emotional hawing between Christopher Ainslie's Athamas and Jurgita Adamonytė's Ino – Semele's rejected bridegroom and the bridesmaid who adores him from afar – is breathtakingly done. ... Ainslie and Adamonytė are profoundly touching together."
– Tim Ashley, The Guardian

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"Christopher Ainslie ... sang with real style as Semele's rejected earthly bridegroom." – Melanie Eskenazi, musicOMH

"Christopher Ainslie in the latter part sang with fluent, graceful ease." – Curtis Rogers, Seen and Heard International

"Athamas' first aria of passion, 'Hymen, haste, thy torch prepare' ... was technically accomplished and stylishly phrased." – Claire Seymour, Opera Today

"...and Christopher Ainslie ... was on superb light form as Athamas." – Serenhedd James, First Direction

Bach Magnificat, Oregon Bach Festival (July 2016)

"The soloists, too, proved excellent. ... Countertenor Christopher Ainslie sang with forthright purity." – Terry McQuilkin, The Register-Guard

MacMillan A European Requiem (world premiere), Oregon Bach Festival (July 2016)

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie sang the florid lines of the "Kyrie eleison" section with clarity and confidence. The soloists [Christopher Ainslie and Morgan Smith] brought refined artistry to their "In paradisum" duet..." – Terry McQuilkin, The Register-Guard

Bach Mass in B minor, Oregon Bach Festival (June 2016)

"The final aria, a haunting Agnus Dei (sung beautifully last night by countertenor Christopher Ainslie) fades into the gentle swelling and transcendent peace of the closing Dona Nobis." – Rachael Carnes, Eugene Weekly

"Many of the solos were taken by a fine countertenor, Christopher Ainslie." – Marilyn Farwell, The Register-Guard

Bach Mass in B minor, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (May 2016)

"... the countertenor Christopher Ainslie, who has a fine high sound..." – Anne Midgette, Washington Post

Gluck Orfeo ed Euridice (Orfeo), Opéra national de Lorraine, Nancy (April 2016)

"Meaty and powerful in the initial expression of loss, the countertenor also displayed a softness during the intimate moments, such as his emotional plea to the Furies, which was of a crystalline delicacy." – Laurent Bergnach, Anaclase – la musique au jour le jour

"The role of Orpheus falls to Christopher Ainslie. ... He convinces with his youthful ardour and his eloquence, and touches with his lament." – Michel Thomé, Res Musica

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"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie gives his Orpheus (a role originally for a castrato) vibrant youth, a clear timbre, a soaring treble register, low notes without fault, beautiful diction and great conviction."
– Caroline Alexander, WebThéâtre

Handel Saul (David), Glyndebourne, Lewes (October 2015)

"Christopher Ainslie's David, silver-voiced, serene and inscrutable."
– Fiona Maddocks, The Observer

"From Ainslie's suppleness of tone to...the panting, unguarded Glyndebourne chorus, it's a triumph." – Anna Picard, The Times

"While acting the part of Saul's young, ambitious and ultimately successful rival David with keen perception, South African countertenor Christopher Ainslie brings outstanding tonal beauty to his singing."
– George Hall, The Stage

"As the young warrior David, Christopher Ainslie was a compelling presence – a still centre of elegance and grace – and his principal arias were taken with great musicianship."
– Roger Parker, Opera

"Christopher Ainslie is the new David, an accomplished and handsome countertenor whose appeal to all three of Saul's children is self-explanatory."
– Mark Valencia, whatsonstage.com

"Confidence was also on show in the David of Christopher Ainslie...he silenced an array of 'impressive' audience coughers with a beautifully phrased 'O Lord, whose Mercies Numberless.'"
– Melanie Eskenazi, musicomh.com

Handel Agrippina (Ottone), International Handel Festival, Göttingen (May 2015)

"As well as having the opera's most poignant arias, Christopher Ainslie as Ottone gets to spend a lot of time shirtless. Quite when anybody who clearly spends so many hours in fitness studios has time for vocal practice is a mystery, but Ainslie has clearly not neglected the latter."
– Shirley Apthorp, Financial Times

"Christopher Ainslie was the third excellent countertenor, familiar to me from his various fine performances at English National Opera. He made Ottone, Poppea's true love, the straight man of the piece and comparatively simpatico."
– Tom Sutcliffe, Opera Now

"Christopher Ainslie as her lover Ottone convinces with highly expressive singing."
– Jonas Rohde, Göttinger Tageblatt

"Christopher Ainslie as Ottone, however, exuded the most impressive countertenor lustre – clear, powerful, and with a magnificently warm timbre."
– Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine

"Asides from his ability to empathise using his voice, Christopher Ainslie shows off his sex appeal – whether he is dressed in flattering luxury garments or completely topless."
– Neue Musikzeitung

Handel Messiah, Calgary Philharmonic, Jack Singer Concert Hall (December 2014)

"Counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie has a strong, clear voice...sure in his technique and clearly delivery of the words."
– Kenneth DeLong, Calgary Herald

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Andre Tchaikovsky The Merchant of Venice (Antonio) on DVD , Bregenz Festival

"Eröd and Ainslie are heartbreaking and unforgettable." – Tim Ashley, The Guardian

"... thanks not least to Christopher Ainslie's expertly detailed, at times genuinely moving portrayal." – Max Loppert, Opera

Monteverdi The Coronation of Poppea (Ottone), Opera North, Grand Theatre Leeds (October 2014)

"There are no surtitles, so everything hinges on the singers' diction, which was on the whole good. Counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie, as Poppea's rejected lover Ottone, was outstanding in this respect." – Anthony Arblaster, Opera Now

"Ainslie's sweet, supple counter-tenor." – Anna Picard, The Spectator

"Christopher Ainslie, whose acting skills as Ottone are considerable." – Richard Wilcocks, bachtrack.com

"Ottone is nicely played by Christopher Ainslie...he's another brilliant physical performer." – Graham Rickson, theartsdesk.com

"Christopher Ainslie as Ottone blends smoothly in [his] recitatives." – Geoffrey Mogridge, Opera Britannia

"Christopher Ainslie as Ottone is a fine countertenor." – John Leeman, seenandheardinternational.com

Theseus / Messenger (Thebans), English National Opera (May 2014)

"Christopher Ainslie was spellbinding in his narration – a Messenger who made you really listen to the message – and his countertenor seems to be growing in its powers of projection." – John Allison, Opera

"Christopher Ainslie's otherworldly, gilded Theseus/Messenger mastered his difficult but effective vocal lines, in which word stresses did not always fall on the strong beat but sounded all the more natural for it." – Fiona Maddocks, The Observer

"...strong individual performances from ...Christopher Ainslie (Theseus) and Julia Sporsén (Antigone) fleshed out the drama of the production by Pierre Audi." – George Hall, Opera Now

"Christopher Ainslie as Messenger/Theseus is admirable." – Barry Millington, Evening Standard

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie was on great otherworldly form as Theseus." – Peter Reed, classicalsource.com

"There's strong support from Christopher Ainslie." – Simon Thomas, whatsonstage.com

Bach St Matthew Passion, Royal Northern Sinfonia / Zehetmair, The Sage Gateshead (April 2014)

"Christopher Ainslie's tight, focused tone acquired pleasing plangency for a sublime Erbarme Dich." – Alfred Hicking, The Guardian

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"Christopher Ainslie was a delight to listen to. His "Ach mein Jesu" was steeped in agony, with big pauses and then gorgeous shape in the very long held notes. "Buß und Reu" went with a gentle lilt, his tone soothing against the bitter teardrops of the flute. The hauntingly beautiful "Erbarme dich" was sung with simplicity and a beautiful shaping of the lines."

– Jane Shuttleworth, bachtrack.com

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie invested Buss und Reu with an aching beauty." – Gavin Engelbrecht, The Northern Echo

Handel Rodelinda (Unulfo), English National Opera, London Coliseum (February 2014)

"Stellar performance from...the cast's other countertenor, Christopher Ainslie."

– The Guardian (10 Best Live Classical Events of 2014)

"Ultimately, however, the evening belongs to its two countertenors, Davies and Ainslie, the former infinitely noble and moving, the latter darker toned yet fabulously agile. They've rarely been bettered in their respective roles, and are both, quite simply, breathtaking." – Tim Ashley, The Guardian

"Christopher Ainslie rises splendidly to the challenges posed by the subsidiary roles." – Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph

"Christopher Ainslie, as Unolfo, profiles a promising countertenor." – Andrew Clark, Financial Times

"As the hapless adviser, Unulfo, Christopher Ainslie offers a more occluded but still beautiful version of the countertenor voice."

– Fiona Maddocks, The Observer

"Christopher Ainslie contributes fine solos." – Barry Millington, Evening Standard

"Christopher Ainslie was an Unulfo who blossomed as the evening wore on, coming into his own during his Act 2 aria on the treadmills."

– Erica Jeal, Opera

"South African countertenor Christopher Ainslie spectacularly took the role of Unulfo, one of two main countertenor roles."

– Colin Clarke, seenandheardinternational.com

"Christopher Ainslie's singing was certainly melodious and captured the deferential, ingenuous character of the role."

– Curtis Rogers, classicalsource.com

"Countertenors Iestyn Davis and Christopher Ainslie complement each other's vocal timbre while displaying top-notch acting chops."

– Mark Valencia, whatsonstage.com

"Ainslie turned in some excellently expressive singing."

– Robert Huggill, Planethuggill.com

Britten Death in Venice (Voice of Apollo), Opera North, Grand Theatre, Leeds (October 2013)

"There's a beautiful, eroticised Apollo from Christopher Ainslie."

– Tim Ashley, The Guardian

"The bare-chested, sweet-voiced Apollo of Christopher Ainslie."

– Geoff Brown, The Times

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"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie was a bare-chested Voice of Apollo and brings a warmth and purity of timbre to the role."
– Geoffrey Mogridge, Opera Britannia

"Countertenor Christopher Ainslie is powerful and crystal-clear as the god of artistic control and independent thinking, dominating the stage too briefly."
– Richard Wilcocks, bachtrack.com

"Christopher Ainslie's clear-voiced counter-tenor Apollo."
– Ron Simpson, whatsonstage.com

"Christopher Ainslie is engaging as Voice of Apollo."
– Martin Dreyer, The York Press

Andre Tchaikovsky The Merchant of Venice (Antonio), Bregenz Festival (July 2013)

"...the excellent cast – including Christopher Ainslie's Merchant... - helped make this a restitution to remember."
– John Allison, The Daily Telegraph

"The worthy Antonio, the only one without a "family" is scored for a countertenor. Christopher Ainslie was absolutely perfect in this role."
– Der neue Merker, Wien

"Much applause of course must also go to the sweet-voiced countertenor Christopher Ainslie (Antonio)." – Wiener Zeitung

"Christopher Ainslie brings the appropriate colour as Antonio." – Vorarlberger Nachrichten, Schwarzach

"Christopher Ainslie performs the fragile figure of Antonio very convincingly." – Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, Linz

Cavalli Eliogabalo, Gotham Chamber Opera, The Box, New York, March 2013

"...a terrific cast, headed by the impressive, sexy countertenor Christopher Ainslie. Now on his way to becoming a rock star of Baroque opera, Mr. Ainslie excels as the cross-dressing emperor and carries himself like Jonathan Rhys Meyers's pop idol character in Velvet Goldmine."
– Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times

"Christopher Ainslie sang stylishly and committed completely and hilariously to the vileness of the title character."
– Heidi Waleson, The Wall Street Journal

"Christopher Ainslie nailed Eliogabalo's lean and sociopathic look."
– James Jorden, The New York Post

"The South African countertenor Christopher Ainslie sang strongly in the title role and looked nicely louche in a Tim Curry-ish way."
– John Rockwell, Opera

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Handel Messiah, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, The Lighthouse, Poole (December 2012)

The four soloists were all first rate with counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie giving a scintillating performance of 'But who may abide', and continuing to shine at every opportunity including an exquisitely inflected 'He was despised'. – The Daily Echo

Glanert Caligula , English National Opera, May 2012

'The cast is consistently superb ... the way Ainslie conveys a sense of servile evil beneath immense surface charm is unforgettable.' – Tim Ashley, The Guardian

'The cast excels, too, in the huge demands placed upon them - notably ... Christopher Ainslie in his immaculately sung performance of Caligula's slave, Helicon.' – George Hall, The Stage

'... a star cameo part for countertenor Christopher Ainslie as his slave, Helicon.' – Hugh Canning, The Australia

'... contrasted nicely with the purer voice of counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie, who was superbly cast as the creepy, pathetic but dangerous Helicon, Caligula's right-hand man. His nervous interactions with Caligula, as he tries to explain to the emperor the possible logistical problems of capturing the moon for him, provided genuine edge-of-the-seat material.' – Dominic Wells, Opera Britannia

"Christopher Ainslie was perhaps the star of the show, his countertenor Helicon, Caligula's slave, making one keen to hear him in Britten and other florid roles, ancient and modern." – Mark Berry, Seen and Heard

Bach Magnificat and Unser Mund sei voll Lachens BWV 110, Retrospect Ensemble, Wigmore Hall, December 2011

"Among the solo singing, the alto of Christopher Ainslie was notably textured and expressive." - Paul Driver, The Sunday Times

"the audience was treated to some fine solo singing, noticeably from countertenor Christopher Ainslie...the singers shone in their solo passages...Christopher Ainslie again turning heads with his crisp and supple delivery." - John-Pierre Joyce, Music OMH

Amadigi (Handel's Amadigi di Gaula), Central City Opera, July 2011

"Christopher Ainslie made a highly impressive US debut in the title role...He showed complete stylistic and technical mastery...a properly weighted sense of delivering Handelian recit – a key strength of Ainslie" – David Shengold, Opera

"Ainslie was brilliant in the title role, singing with a clear tone and mellifluous heft. Looking every bit the hero as well, his two fine duets with Oriana and Melissa respectively brought a splendid melding of tones. He was wonderfully expressive also, for example, with the two recorders that graced his long cavatina in Act II as he addressed the Fountain of True Love." – Richard B. Beams, Opera con Brio

"[Christopher Ainslie] brings dramatic weight to the title role and skilfully and expressively handles its complex vocal demands." – Kyle Macmillan, Denver Post

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Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes), Arne/Page, CD/SACD Linn Records

"Christopher Ainslie is outstanding in the title role."

– Stephen Pettitt The Sunday Times, 9th January 2011

"This recording features stunning performances from some of Britain's top young Baroque singers, including the remarkable countertenor Christopher Ainslie in the title role."

– BBC Radio Scotland **'Disc of the Month'**

"some of the best singing comes from Christopher Ainslie in the title-role. In Act 1, Artaxerxes has a lovely solo, "Fair Semira", which reveals how unforced is his vocalism.[...]the drop on 'oppress'd' is managed seamlessly by Ainslie. Ainslie, the only South African countertenor of my experience, is also agile enough in more ornate music"

- John T. Hughes, International Record Review

"Christopher Ainslie is a dignified Artaxerxes"

- Chris O'Reilly, prestoclassical.co.uk

"here [Artaxerxes] is presented complete and to a consistently high standard. The very fine cast enters with spirit into the text's convoluted scenario of love and betrayal in ancient Persia and delivering the notes with assurance"

- George Hall, BBC Music Magazine

"such vocal treasures as Christopher Ainslie (Artaxerxes)", "classy, crystal clear recording"

- Kenneth Walton, The Scotsman

"Christopher Ainslie as Artaxerxes woos with honeyed tone"

- Richard Lawrence, Classic FM

"now [Artaxerxes] appears on this stylish, beautifully produced recording", "countertenor Christopher Ainslie gives a muscular performance in the title role"

- Geoffrey Alton, Opera Now

Ottone (**L'**incoronazione di Poppea), Glyndebourne, October 2010

"Christopher Ainslie is a compelling Ottone."

- Martin Kettle, The Guardian

"Christopher Ainslie's portrayal of Ottone was stunning, his lean, even countertenor seemingly having gained in power and nobility."

- Peter Reed, Opera Magazine

Tamerlano (Tamerlano), International Handel – Festspiele Göttingen, May 2010

"Singing and acting honours went to Christopher Ainslie, the young South African countertenor in the title role... Ainslie's Tamerlano was a youthful yet malevolent presence rather than an obvious tyrant. He has one of the better voices of its kind, rich, evenly produced and well projected with no covering; his 'Dammi pace' was both musical and menacing without being grotesque."

– Sandra Bowdler, Opera Magazine

"In the title role, alto countertenor Christopher Ainslie displayed fiendish agility and acted with vicious intensity throughout."

- Carlo Vitali, Musicalamerica.com

"The Alto Christopher Ainslie sings his part with a steely timbre and, particularly in his rage aria, fantastically confident coloratura."

– Werner Fritsch, HNA.de

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"Christopher Ainslie exudes charisma and has an excellent technique."

– Joachim Lange, Kultiversum

"In the title role of the Mongolian ruler, Christopher Ainslie is not only an incredibly virtuosic alto with a beautiful voice, but also a performer with many facets. His transformation from friendly ruler who forgives his enemies to jealous and unpredictable tyrant is totally believable."

– Michael Schäfer, Göttinger Tageblatt

"Christopher Ainslie's light alto is capable of considerable menace as Tamerlano. Rarely has the word 'Amigo' been sung with such a chill, and his trills and runs ooze threats. His slender body belies the character's strength, illustrated not least by arm-wrestling his ally Andronico."

– Catriona Graham, The Opera Critic

Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes), Linbury Studio, November 2009

"Marooned in the passive title role, Christopher Ainslie sports the anxious brow of a myopic who may or may not have seen a familiar face, but sings with tender dignity."

– Anna Picard, The Independent

"The South African countertenor Christopher Ainslie sang the title role of Artaxerxes, originally composed for the alto castrato Nicolò Peretti. It is a very low lying role, so at first it seemed peculiar that a countertenor who can sing the high alto castrato part of Ruggiero in Handel's Alcina, should be assigned to sing Artaxerxes, when the role of Arbaces would have been a more logical fit. As it is, Ainslie's countertenor easily coped with the vocal demands of Artaxerxes, especially in his Act III aria "Tho' oft a Cloud, with envious Shade", which has the sort of stirring melodramatic string accompaniment you ordinarily hear in Vivaldi's rage arias. It is a very attractive soft-grained voice, with a mellow timbre and evidently good top."

– Antony Lias, Opera Britannia

Ruggiero (Alcina), Hong Kong Arts Festival, June 2009

"Ruggiero found an ideal interpreter in Christopher Ainslie, whose musicianship and technical prowess are of the very first order."

- Opera Magazine

Bach's B Minor Mass - Birmingham, 2008

"...counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie was movingly eloquent..."

- Birmingham Post

Winner of the 2008 Richard Tauber Competition

"...His account of Dawn, still darkness from Jonathan Dove's "Flight" was as near to perfection as anything I have heard in the Wigmore Hall..."

- Musical Pointers

'Rising Stars'

"...Ainslie made every word tell, his focused singing painting a terrifying picture of their ordeal. Schubert's Nachtstueck which completed his programme was distinguished by the sensitivity of his interpretation..."

- Musical Opinion

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Handel's Messiah - Ireland, 2008

"...counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie sang with an affecting directness that was completely devoid of the many mannerisms that counter-tenors are prone to..."
- Irish Times

Arsace (Partenope), Les Azuriales Festival, Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, 2008

"...above all, the arresting Arsace of Christopher Ainslie. This South African counter tenor is a revelation; equally at ease with the runs of "Furibondo spira il vento" as with the sorrowful and bewitching "Ch'io parta?", he holds the audience spellbound both by the expressiveness of his tone and the musicality of his interpretation, A talent to watch..."
- Opera Magazine

"...Christopher Ainslie who ... won the Richard Tauber prize at the Wigmore Hall, and has been making a brisk ascent through the Handelian hierarchy ever since. His Les Azuriales Arsace was incredibly accomplished: full, strong tone combined with eloquent musicianship and keen dramatic credibility. This autumn he's covering Andreas Scholl's Arsace for the new Royal Danish Opera Partenope in Copenhagen. But after that I'm sure his covering days are over. He'll be playing major houses in his own right..."
- Opera Now

Poro, Re dell'Indie (title role), London Handel Festival, 2007

"...Comfortable at both extremes of his voice, artfully expressive between the two, eloquent in his body language, easy in his coloratura, and a compelling actor even when listening, silently, at the edge of the stage, Ainslie has remarkable presence. But this is a remarkable role, in a remarkable and inexplicably ignored opera. Superbly directed, stylishly conducted, properly nurturing of young talent, and totally gripping in the interaction between the characters, this was the most enjoyable staging of a Handel opera or oratorio I have seen since the revival of Peter Sellars' *Theodora*..."
- The Independent on Sunday

"...Conductor Laurence Cummings belongs to the Handelian school of relish and coaxes and cajoles honest primary colours from the London Handel Orchestra. But on the singing front only counter-tenor Christopher Ainslie (Poro) and soprano Ruby Hughes (Cleofide) possess what might be described as the essential quality of rapture. Individually they shine, together they entwine with touching awareness of the orchestra's luscious harmonic suspensions..."
- The Independent

"...He has a strong, well-supported, alto voice with no hoot or wobble and – in contrast to Vale – had plenty of opportunity to display his natural ease and skill with the more poignant and reflective arias that Handel wrote for the master of that genre in the 1730's. His acting skills were to be applauded too – he managed to find a number of ways to continually display jealousy without succumbing to routine..."
- Opera Today

2007 Handel Singing Competition

"...countertenor Christopher Ainslie, who is one of those singers who comes onto the platform looking as though he is pleased to be there and can't wait to share his singing with the audience. He has a lovely creamy voice and good breath control, amply demonstrated in his opening piece, *Ombra mai fu*. Arias from *Orlando* and *Tamerlano* followed, clear, accurate and well characterised. ..."

- Musical Pointers

Christopher Ainslie

Selected Reviews

Solomon (title role), London Handel Festival, 2007

"...Ainslie's Solomon was beautifully toned, well supported and nicely phrased. Ainslie is a very musical singer. I would have liked more of a sense of drama and more of a feeling of letting go at the crucial moments, but given the last-minute nature of his substitution we must wait for a further opportunity to hear what he can do in this role. But there is no sense of short change, Ainslie's was a highly effective and affecting performance..."
– MyCulturalLife

Medoro (Handel's Orlando), Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells, 2006

"...Christopher Ainslie was a golden Medoro vocally and visually."
- Opera Today

"...As Orlando's rival in love, Medoro, Christopher Ainslie was called upon to spend a large part of the time dressed only in a gilt brocade sarong. It says much for Ainslie's sang-froid and competence that he managed to bring this off and dazzle with his singing. Medoro is a lover rather than a knight, so his arias tend to be of the expressive sort rather than martially dramatic. Ainslie responded with shapely singing and convincing dramatic involvement. That the cast was young was a great help in this production. Ainslie and Rebecca Ryan as Angelica really convinced that they were in love, and Ainslie's scene with Dorinda (Joana Seara), where he has to sympathise with her love for him without actually telling her that he loves another, was very moving. .."
- Music & Vision