
Christopher Ainslie

Selected Reviews

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***

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***

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"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***

"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***

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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**

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**

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**

'Who's Hot?'

"...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**

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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***

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***

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Rayfield Allied
Southbank House,
Black Prince Road,
London SE1 7SJ, UK
www.rayfieldallied.com
E-mail info@rayfieldallied.com
Telephone +44 (0) 20 3176 5500
Facsimile +44 (0) 700 602 4143

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