
Robin Blaze

Selected Reviews

BBC Radio 3 Record Review "Building a Library", Edition on the Matthew Passion (Broadcast on 7 April 2012)

"That aria, *Erbarme Dich* has been championed by many countertenors, and on the 1999 Bach Collegium Japan recording, it's sung with humility and carefully judged timbral control by Robin Blaze. I apologise to commuters on the 08.47 from Didcott to Paddington on the 20th March: the tears were because I was listening to this... [plays aria]...The kaleidoscope of colours that Blaze brings to the vocal line is thoroughly beguiling." - **Jeremy Summerly**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 50, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1941 (March 2012)

"countertenor Robin Blaze is on particularly fine form, effortlessly entwined with Gerd Türk above a fruity bassoon in BWV 149, and stealing hearts in BWV 174." - **Paul Riley, BBC Music Magazine (5 star review)**

"Robin Blaze brings his usual elegance and instinctive phrasing to the long lines of the opening aria of the same cantata [BWV174], warming the ends of the sustained notes with some judicious vibrato and offering plenty of projection without any hardening of tone." - **Simon Heighes, International Record Review**

Handel Messiah, Tafelmusik/Ivars Taurins, Koerner Hall Toronto (December 2011)

"The soloists that Tafelmusik chose for the occasion were, to say the least, an impressive group. All four brought strengths to the performance, including clear diction, solid technique and an admirable sense of period style...English countertenor Robin Blaze took to Handel's roulades very much in stride, with his supple and agile voice. In *But Who May Abide* and other solos he sang with an innocent, cherub-like quality that was quite charming." - **Colin Eatock, The Globe and Mail**

"Further adding to the Messianic magic was a power quartet of soloists: soprano Karina Gauvin, countertenor Robin Blaze, tenor Rufus Müller and baritone Brett Polegato. They each, in their own way, sang as if their lives — and souls — depended on every note and word being true." - **John Terauds, Toronto.com**

Handel Messiah, Minnesota Orchestra/Nicholas Kraemer, Orchestra Hall Minneapolis (December 2011)

"Robin Blaze was a standout, especially on the stark and sorrowful 'He was despised'." - **Rob Hubbard, Pioneer Press**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 48, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1881 (July 2011)

"the opening of BWV 120, a tight-rope of alto semi-demi-quavers on which Blaze balances with remarkable security and poise – quite the best I've heard on disc" - **BBC Music Magazine, 5 star review**

"Blaze's vocal style and approach to Bach have matured considerably. His poised and beautifully wrought performance of this aria [...] is simply enchanting...Blaze's lilting aria [...] is very attractive...Blaze's flexibility allows him to overcome Bach's florid coloratura in his aria with aplomb" - **Christopher Price, International Record Review**

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German Sacred Music, Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music (St John's, Smith Square, London May 2011)

"Earnest fugues and sober Protestant chorales are what we expect from German composers, but as the evening concert at St John's Smith Square reminded us, a warm Italian breeze was blowing northwards at this time. There were quite a few operatic moments in this programme of German sacred music, alongside some delicious dance rhythms and violin duets. All this was captured with unforced, easy energy by counter-tenor Robin Blaze... a winningly unfussy singer."

- Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

"a challenging, absorbing and uplifting recital... The concert concluded with one man and a lute, in Krieger's plaintive, eloquently despairing reflection on solitude *An die Einsamkeit* rendered by Robin Blaze with clear, plaintive, eloquent despair."

- *Bachtrack*

Bach Cantatas BWV 72, 159, 127, 147, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki (Hong Kong City Hall, February 2011)

"Suzuki had a commanding group of vocal soloists; the fact that they've collaborated before ensured familiarity with both the music and Suzuki's working style. Stepping forward from the chorus for solo spots, Hana Blazikova (soprano), Robin Blaze (countertenor), Gerd Turk (tenor) and bass Peter Kooij sang to crystalline effect, with never a hint of ego obscuring the music", "the selection of cantatas gave the countertenor most of the limelight. Blaze responded superbly with a musicality that was all the more powerful for its restraint: *Ich folge dir nach* from *Sehet, wir gehen hinauf* (BWV159) was truly affecting".

- Sam Olliver, *South China Morning Post*

Bach Cantatas Vol. 47, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki

"...in BWV27, such is the ringing paradise of the fragrant oboe d'amore and obbligato harpsichord that Robin Blaze's sprightly and generous singing leaves us relishing the prospect of our passing, as much as embracing 'the valuable treasure' of Christ's imminent arrival." - Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, *Gramophone Vocal Reviews*

"Blaze is totally at ease duetting with oboe da caccia in BWV27." - George Pratt, *BBC Music Magazine Choral&Song Choice*

"...the movement is handled with exceptional sensitivity...They [Blaze, Blazikova and Mizukoshi] bring to their asides a deeply lyrical sincerity...they hover powerfully between recitative and almost aria." - Simon Heighes, *International Record Review*

Bach Cantatas Vol. 35, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki

"[Robin Blaze] just shines literally throughout this disc...Blaze is an extraordinary interpreter when it comes to sensitivity to text. I don't think I've ever heard such a seductive, limpid beauty of tone that has so much emotion behind it."

- *BBC Radio 3 CD Review*

Handel *Israel in Egypt*, Koncerto Köln (Eloquentia: EL1022, August 2010)

"There are some lovely moments, such as Robin Blaze's charismatic "Thou shalt bring them in" - *The Gramophone*

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Pergolesi *Stabat Mater, Salve Regina, Florilegium* (Channel Classics 29810, July 2010)

"Beauty and technical ease combine in a performance that captures Pergolesi's subdued reverence. Manahan Thomas' and Blaze's voices are a brilliant match. 'Qui est homo' sums it up: perfect vocal blending, breathtaking control and a delivery that simulates tearful sorrow." – **Classic fM**

"Elin Manahan Thomas, Robin Blaze and Florilegium phrase it beautifully, bringing just the right amount of weight to tension and release. In the fourth section, "Quae morebat", the pringly rhythm in the strings is skillfully picked up and developed by Blaze.. Excellent performances all round." – **Classic fM**

"countertenor Robin Blaze never has sounded better, his timbre warmly resonant, his technique fluid and effortless, his intelligence and thoughtful interpretive manner on impressive display" – **Classics Today**

"...a clean but characterful countertenor (...) intimacy with delicacy (...) Blaze takes a resolutely unsentimental approach – poised, intense and often quite husky." – **International Record Review**

" (...) Both singers are intensely sensitive (...) Blaze displays his wide and even vocal range in the Salve Regina, particularly effective in the lowest register, sustaining a full-toned falsetto without any hint of gear-change to bass"

– **BBC Music Magazine**

"Elin Manahan Thomas, Robin Blaze and Florilegium phrase it beautifully, bringing just the right amount of weight to tension and release. In the fourth section, "Quae morebat", the springy rhythm in the strings is skilfully picked up and developed by Blaze. He is also the soloist in the *Salve regina*, a more consistently solemn piece. Excellent performances all round."

– **The Gramophone**

"countertenor Robin Blaze never has sounded better, his timbre warmly resonant, his technique fluid and effortless, his intelligence and thoughtful interpretive manner on impressive display" – **Classics Today**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 45, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1801 (January 2010)

"Robin Blaze is in excellent form" – **BBC Music Magazine**

"no one could convey the gallant sweetness of the alto aria, "Du Herr, du krönst allein" with more "unction and blessing" (to quote the translation here) than Robin Blaze." – **The Gramophone**

"Making short work of the considerable technical challenges Robin Blaze superbly delivers his alto aria "Du Herr, du krönst allein"." – **Music Web International**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 44, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1791 (November 2009)

"There is more immaculately judged work from Robin Blaze." – **The Gramophone**

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Bach Cantatas Vol. 42, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1711 (April 2009)

"Robin Blaze's alluring countertenor" – **BBC Music Magazine**

Arias from Rodelinda and Giulio Cesare, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra/McGegan (New York, 2009)

"Mr Blaze's cool intensity was an asset in "Dove sei"" – **The New York Times**

"Blaze's countertenor has unusual warmth that was strongly complemented by the orchestra's beautiful sound, conveying 'Dove sei' from "Rodelinda" with poignant beauty." – **Classical Source**

Athalia, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra/McGegan (San Francisco, May 2009)

"Countertenor Robin Blaze spilled through his Act 1 lamentations, wonderously, with liquid ease." – **Mercury News**

"They stomped their feet on the wooden floors and thundered applause for a long time at the conclusion of the two hours. Indeed all shined and set off each other's solo but the counter tenor was spell binding. It's as if Robin Blaze as the biblical high priest Joad channels the voice of arch angels. He commands with a dramatic demeanor and reaches every last pew of the church as if he sings softly and carries a big stick." – **San Francisco Opera Examiner**

Purcell Fairest Isle, Handel, Sonnerie (Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music, May 2009)

" Directed from the violin by Monica Huggett, with Robin Blaze's guileless counter-tenor gliding over the deep-green tides of consonance and dissonance from lutenist Elizabeth Kenny and harpsichordist James Johnstone, this was a thrillingly vivid recital." – **The Independent**

"The counter-tenor Robin Blaze was the soloist in this (Purcell's *Fairest Isle*) and in some almost equally lovely arias from Handel oratorios. There's a winning artless quality in Blaze's singing, which is very welcome in a field of music-making that can often seem a bit precious." – **The Telegraph**

Stabat Mater (Pergolesi), Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra/McGegan (San Francisco, May 2009)

"The singers had proved their versatility and theatrical flair in a group of Handel arias earlier in the program. Mr. Blaze's cool intensity was an asset in "Dove sei", a touching lament from the opera "Rodelinda", and in two duets: "Io t'abbraccio"...and "Caro! Bella!" – **The New York Post**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 35, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1621 (April 2008)

"[Robin Blaze] just shines literally throughout this disc...Blaze is an extraordinary interpreter when it comes to sensitivity to text. I don't think I've ever heard such a seductive, limpid beauty of tone that has so much emotion behind it."

– **BBC Radio 3 CD Review**

"Witness more golden Blaze in the last cantata to cap a disc of especially committed and engaged performances..."

– **The Gramophone**

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Handel *Messiah*, Colorado Symphony Orchestra/Labadie (Colorado, December 2008)

"A special treat was Labadie's choice of the spellbinding countertenor Robin Blaze" – ***The Denver Post***

Bach Cantatas Vol. 40, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1671 (November 2008)

"Robin Blaze exudes radiance in the alto aria of BWV 137" – ***BBC Music Magazine***

"The work becomes even more involving with Robin Blaze producing, in his ideal register, a delectable reading of the first aria."
– ***The Gramophone***

"Robin Blaze [is] as intelligent and thoughtful as ever, delivering a particularly rich and strongly projected chorale in BWV 137..."
– ***International Record Review***

Handel *Israel in Egypt*, Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Haim (Edinburgh International Festival, August 2008)

"there was counter-tenor magic from Robin Blaze" – ***The Times***

Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*), Middle Temple Hall (June 2008)

"Robin Blaze was luxury casting as the Sorceress ... singing with the kind of clear, pure, well-projected definition that should be the life-goal of all countertenors." – ***Opera Now***

Guido (*Flavio*), Academy Of Ancient Music/Hogwood (Barbican, April 2008)

"Robin Blaze (Guido) produced a confident and full countertenor tone with some beautifully flowing faster passages and persuasive acting." – ***MusicalCriticism.com***

"...the softer toned Robin Blaze, making the most of his poetic and expressive arias as the troubled, love-lorn Guido."
– ***Evening Standard***

"I would single out the elegant timbre of the counter-tenor Robin Blaze..." – ***The Telegraph***

"one of a remarkable pair of countertenors ... was Robin Blaze in a lovelorn role" – ***Birmingham Post***

Bach *B Minor Mass*, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS-SACD1701 (February 2008)

"Et in unum Dominum ... reveals its expected delights, as does Blaze's heart-stopping 'Agnus Dei'" – ***The Gramophone***

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Songs by Henry and William Lawes, Hyperion CDA67589 (January 2007)

"This sensitivity is fully matched by Robin Blaze, in whom the brothers have found their ideal interpreter. His exquisitely controlled expressiveness ensures that the tiniest emotional nuance in text and music makes its best effect, and also enables him to characterise to perfection such lighter-hearted items as William's elegantly dance-like Oh, My Clarissa, or Henry's ludicrously comic setting of the index to an Italian song-book." – **Elizabeth Roche, *The Daily Telegraph***

Bach B Minor Mass, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki (Barbican June 2006)

"A most loyal member of the Suzuki roadshow is the counter-tenor Robin Blaze, who, aptly and reliably, kindles sparks in any performance. It was sheer joy to hear his fresh and instinctive musicality in the Qui sedes." – **The Times**

"Robin Blaze coloured subtly in the 'Agnus Dei'" – **The Independent**

Handel 'Great Oratorio Duets', Carolyn Sampson/OAE/Kraemer, BIS-SACD 1436 (May 2006)

"...together in mouthwatering partnership two of the most dulcet-voiced young Baroque singers Britain has to offer ... Robin Blaze has a distinctively tangy sound ... and in their faultless display of Handelian style, lyricism and warmth they are in total mental and spiritual accord." – **The Gramophone**

"The first excerpt from *Susanna* finds the heroine and her husband carolling in perfect harmony; as they do in the second, with Blaze's faultless rendering of "I'll the swelling note prolong"." – **Classic FM Magazine**

English Lute Songs, Kenny, Hyperion, CDA67126 (December 2005)

"Robin Blaze's recital...can be recommended without reservation. There's a remarkable technical ease and innate literary intelligence about Blaze's singing which together with the astounding beauty of his voice makes this one of the most outstanding recitals of its kind on disc." – **BBC Music Magazine**

Concert, Yorkshire Baroque Soloists/Seymour (York Early Music Festival, July 2005)

...the counter-tenor Robin Blaze, whose ardent solos on the gorgeous final pages of Purcell's *Te Deum* were worth the ticket price by themselves. – **The Times**

Handel *Jephtha*, English National Opera/Kraemer (May 2005)

"Robin Blaze (Hamor, Iphis's would-be husband) whose name proves appropriate to the exultancy of his coloratura." – **The Independent**

Handel *Semele*, English National Opera/Cummings (February 2005)

"Robin Blaze's honeyed sounds were applied intelligently to the role of Athamas" – **Opera**

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Bach Cantatas, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS CD1351 (November 2004)

"...'Wie furchtsam wankten meine Schritte', sung beautifully by Robin Blaze. Blaze is one of the chief attractions of the series, a real countertenor (as opposed to one who aspires to be an operatic mezzo) with wonderful control and rich colours throughout a wide range." – **International Record Review**

Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, English National Opera/Daniel (June 2004)

"A strong, tautly directed cast led by Robin Blaze's chilly, beautifully sung Oberon" – **Guardian**

"That exquisite counter-tenor Robin Blaze dominates the stage" – **The Independent**

Byrd Consort Songs, Kenny/Concordia, Hyperion CD67397 (May 2004)

"[Byrd] would have admired the voice and art of Robin Blaze, whose sympathetic interpretation of Byrd's melodic style, the rests, the patterning of the phrases and the syncopation, is remarkable." – **The Gramophone**

"Blaze continues to chart new territories of vocal expression. Blending purity with confidence, he draws on his vocal strengths – effortlessly sustained legato, delicate pianissimos, crisp declamation – to starkly varied effect, depending on the context of each song." – **BBC Music Magazine**

"Blaze is on superb form in this recording, his clear, unpretentious sound an ideal partner for Concordia. The songs are chosen to suit his range perfectly" – **International Record Review**

"Blessed with a most alluring countertenor – creamy in tone, naturally expressive, exquisitely controlled – Blaze is the perfect singer for Byrd's consort songs... Blaze delivers with a refinement any great lieder singer would be hard pushed to exceed." – **The Times**

"Here, countertenor Robin Blaze, who continues to mature as a vocalist and musician, shows why he is one of today's top singers, bringing full measure of ardent vocalism to bear in every note of this deeply moving, heartfelt utterance." – **classicstoday.com**

"These songs are pure heaven: melancholic and moody, sweet and sad, Blaze supported by the excellent viol consort Concordia, captures their heart with deceptive ease." – **Independent**

Bach Cantatas Vol. 24, Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BISCD1351 (April 2004)

"Robin Blaze's countertenor is regularly a joy in Bach and he sings here with an affectionate, soft-grained lyricism." – **Gramophone**

Handel *Theodora*, Glyndebourne Festival/Bicket (August 2003)

"Countertenor Robin Blaze as Didymus in Handel's *Theodora* was a key element in producing an evening of transporting beauty ... Blaze performed with a focused energy and with vocals as clear and brilliant as the coastal skies. ...Blaze has achieved not only vocal command but also a sound which is very much his own." – **Opera Now**

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"...as Didymus, Robin Blaze demonstrated what can be achieved with simple musicality. Though impressive throughout, it was with the subtlest of touches that he really defined his character." – *Opera*