
Hilary Summers

Selected Reviews

GIBLERT & SULLIVAN HMS Pinafore, Little Buttercup
English National Opera (October 2021)

“Hilary Summers, with her rich contralto, is his funny, yet touching Little Buttercup...”

- **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***

“Cue floating pedlar Buttercup, who nurses a terrible secret, and who is sung with robust wit by Hilary Summers”

- **Claudia Pritchard, *Culture Whisperer***

“Hilary Summers as Little Buttercup is an absolute delight with her fantastic comic timing and quite formidable singing voice”

- ***Musical Theatre Review***

KURTAG Fin de partie, Nell
Palau de Musica Paseo de la Alameda (November 2020)

“The performance of [...] Summers [...] is simply outstanding.”

- **Ramon del Buey Canas, *bachtrack* (5*)**

BARRY Alice’s Adventures Underground, White Queen
Royal Opera House (February 2020)

“It’s almost invidious to pick out other names from either cast in what is such a brilliantly executed piece, but Hilary Summers is a formidable White Queen.”

- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***

HANDEL Jephtha
Scottish Chamber Orchestra BBC Proms (August 2019)

“Her portrait of maternal despair was vivid.”

- ***The Times***

“Hilary Summers, as the hero’s mother Storge, brought velvet smoothness to her forebodings.”

- ***The Scotsman***

MENDELSSOHN Die erste Walpurgisnacht
Scottish Chamber Orchestra (November 2018)

“Hilary Summers’ warm and expansive contralto added gravitas to the Old Woman.”

- **Susan Nickalls, *The Scotsman***

KURTAG Fin de Partie, Nell
Teatro alla Scala (November 2018)

“[...] Hilary Summers as Nell, whose gentle, confiding delivery of the Roundelay gets this extraordinary, unforgettable piece under way.”

- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian* (5*)**

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“Nell (British contralto Hilary Summers touchingly, absurdly romantic).”

- Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer* (5*)

“Old Nagg (the tenor Leonardo Cortellazzi) and Nell (the contralto Hilary Summers), stuffed by Beckett into side-by-side ashcans, exist in a sphere of ethereal nostalgia and thread-thin high notes that Ms. Summers, in particular, spins with the eerie softness of elderly skin.”

- Zachary Woolfe, *New York Times* (Critic’s Pick)

HANDEL Giulio Cesare, Cornelia Early Opera Company (August 2017)

“Musically, both evenings were a real treat. Countertenor Iestyn Davies’s Caesar and Hilary Summers’s Cornelia were both of a standard to turn a well-worn piece of musical advice on its head... one of the qualities that made Davies and Summers so unusual and exciting was the almost instrumental freedom and accuracy of their delivery, characteristics which help make Handel’s often virtuosic writing shine as it should.”

- Michael Dervan, *The Irish Times*

“The role of Cornelia is arguably the most affecting since her grief at the loss of her husband Pompey is its unchanging characteristic. But the nobility of her suffering is never wearying, so eloquent is her music. Or so it seemed sung by the wonderful Hilary Summers – and her true alto timbre, richness and range has even encompassed the role of Cesare himself. If in the age of the ubiquitous mezzo-soprano designation, someone should start a Society for the Preservation of the Contralto Voice, I propose Hilary Summers as the SPCV’s first President.”

- Roy Westbrook, *Bachtrack*

“Hilary Summers utilised her outstanding contralto to deliver a convincing portrayal of a heart-broken Cornelia.”

- Sam Smith, *MusicOMH*

WAGNER Siegfried, Erda Saffron Opera Group (February 2017)

“And as ever when hearing Wagner in the concert hall, there were things to discover and to delight in, as well as those moments when the whole performance seemed to transcend itself, and the lack of any theatrical setting ceased to matter. Here, the most spellbinding of those moments came at the beginning of the third act, with the confrontation between Hilary Summers’ regal Erda and Greenan’s Wanderer – It is moments like these that make ventures like Saffron Opera’s so worthwhile.”

- Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

Hilary Summers’ majestic contralto gave Erda’s utterances a suitable glow of intensity.

- Peter Reed, *Opera Magazine*

GERALD BARRY Alice’s Adventures Underground, White Queen Britten Sinfonia (November 2016)

“Hilary Summers’ inimitable contralto pairs off with a single double-bass for the dormouse reverie...”

- David Nice, *The Arts Desk*

“Contralto Hilary Summers is resplendent as the White Queen...”

- George Hall, *The Stage*

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"Hilary Summers, Peter Tantsits and Mark Stone also thrived on Barry's high-wire vocal acrobatics."

- **Mark Valencia, *Bachtrack***

HANDEL Israel in Egypt

The King's Consort, VIVAT (March 2016)

"...contralto Hilary Summers sings the assuaging 'Bringe sie hinein' ('Thou shalt bring them in') with mingled gravity and warmth..."

- **Richard Wigmore, *Gramophone Magazine***

"All the soloists make their mark, particularly Hilary Summers' even alto..."

- **George Hall, *BBC Music Magazine***

NYMAN War Work

Michael Nyman Band (December 2015)

"Contralto Hilary Summers is the soloist, her dark, plummy tones meshing perfectly with Nyman's brassy-tinged textures."

- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***

GILBERT & SULLIVAN HMS Pinafore

Scottish Opera at Edinburgh International Festival (June 2015)

"...a cast of British singers perfectly matched to their roles [...] Her glorious dark alto was part of a lovely range of voices..."

- **Herald Scotland**

AYRES Peter Pan, Mrs Darling & Tiger Lily

Welsh National Opera (May 2015)

"Hilary Summers is touching as the distraught Mrs Darling and feistily ladette-like as the bloodthirsty Tiger Lily."

- **Richard Morrison, *The Times* (5*)**

"Hilary Summers as the Mother and Tiger Lily gave strong, clear and well-drawn performances..."

- **Mike Smith, *Wales Online***

STRAVINSKY Oedipus Rex, Jocasta

BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sakari Oramo at BBC Proms (August 2014)

"Then there was the extraordinary Hilary Summers whose showing as Jocasta negotiated the near-impossible register switches and freakish excitement of her big number with great aplomb and clever musicianship. The drama is most certainly in the vocal pyrotechnics - you don't need to add too much to their histrionics. I loved the plangency and sinuousness of her blue-note bluesiness..."

- **Edward Seckerson, *The Arts Desk***

"The cast was a fine one...Hilary Summers was a true contralto Jocasta, regal and dismissive when in full flight."

- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***

BOULEZ Le Marteau Sans Maître

Aurora Orchestra, Franck Ollu (October 2013)

"Hilary Summers delivered René Char's texts with insouciance and a sense of marvel, despite the extreme vocal challenges."

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- **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

“Hilary Summers, hieratic and incantatory, was the alto soloist – utterly mesmerising, above all towards the close, as Boulez dissolves words into pure sound.”

- **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* (5*)**

PURCELL Dido and Aeneas Wiener Festwochen (June 2009)

“It was a wonderful performance, which Summers herself clearly enjoyed, made all the more riveting by her complete vocal command of the part.”

- **Susan Doering, *Vienna Review***

“Led by an Amazon of a sorceress in Hilary Summers...spat and shrieked their vowels, cackling maniacally and revelling in Purcell’s word-setting.”

- ***The Times***

CRUMB Night of the Four Moons The Nash Ensemble at BBC Proms (September 2009)

“The first of the Lorca settings, Night of the Four Moons, has a darkly impassioned sound world, beautifully captured by mezzo-soprano Hilary Summers.”

- **Ivan Hewett, *The Daily Telegraph***

BOULEZ Le Marteau Sans Maître Deutsche Grammophon (March 2005)

“...with Hilary Summers as the rich-toned mezzo, relishes every particle of the settings of the three René Char poems...”

- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***