

Hilary Summers

Contralto



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

The Guardian, Boulez’ Le Marteau sans Maître

Born in South Wales, **Hilary Summers** is one of the world’s few genuine contraltos and has made over forty CDs spanning works from the early baroque period to the present day. She has sung in most of the major concert halls and opera houses of the world.

A specialist in contemporary repertoire, Hilary’s three-octave range has excited the attention of many composers. Operatic world premieres include the role of **Stella** in Carter’s *What Next?* for Berlin State Opera, **Madame Irma** in Peter Eötvös’s *Le balcon* at Aix-en-Provence Festival, **Miss Prism** in Gerald Barry’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and **White Queen, Dormouse** and **Cook** in Gerald Barry’s *Alice’s Adventures Underground*.

In 2018 she created the role of **Nell** in György Kurtág’s *Fin de Partie* at La Scala, Milan to great critical acclaim. Hilary has gone on to reprise the role for premieres at the Dutch National Opera, Opera National de Paris, Palau de les Arts Valencia, De Vlaamse Opera and the UK premiere at the 2023 BBC Proms with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Ryan Wigglesworth.

Hilary worked closely with the iconic composer and conductor Pierre Boulez from 2004. With Boulez and the Ensemble Intercontemporain, she recorded his masterwork *Le marteau sans maître*, for which she won a Grammy Award in 2006. Hilary went onto perform the piece worldwide. She also performed *Le visage nuptial*, Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* and Ligeti’s *Aventures* and *Aventures nouvelles* under his inspirational baton.

A greatly respected interpreter of Baroque repertoire, Hilary has long been in demand for Handelian roles. With William Christie she performed and recorded the role of **Medoro** in *Orlando*; with il Complesso Barocco the role of **Idelberto** in *Lotario*, and with Christian Curnyn and the Early Opera Company Hilary has recorded **Juno** in *Semele*, **Disinganno** in *Il Trionfo del tempo*; **Rosmira** in *Partenope*, **Teodata** in *Flavio* and

Amastre in *Serse*. On the concert platform she has given over one hundred performances of Handel’s *Messiah*. Other favourite concert works include Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius*, Rossini’s *Petite Messe Solonnelle* and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*.

Hilary has forged a special relationship with the composer Michael Nyman and has toured the world with the Michael Nyman Band. He has written many works for her voice including the opera *Facing Goya* and the song cycle *War Work*. Hilary has also collaborated closely with George Benjamin, who composed the contralto role in his first chamber opera *Into the Little Hill* for her. She has sung on several film soundtracks including *The Claim*; *The Libertine* and the *Diary of Anne Frank* (Nyman), *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (Joby Talbot), *The Lord of the Rings* (Howard Shore) and on TV *The League of Gentleman* (Talbot).

She works often with Christian Curnyn and his Early Opera company, recently performing **Cornelia** in *Giulio Cesare* at the Palau in Barcelona as well as singing **Amadigi/Dardano** for their latest recording on the Chandos label. Other recent highlights include Handel’s *Silla* in Japan with Europa Galante and Fabio Biondi, *Messiah* at Schleswig-Holstein Festival under Richard Egarr and a tour of Mendelssohn’s *Walpurgisnacht* with Insula Orchestra under Laurence Equilbey.

Highlights for this coming season include further performances of Kurtág’s *Fin de Partie* in Budapest for the Hungarian premiere as well as at the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg and Kölner Philharmonie, George Benjamin’s *Into the Little Hill* with the Finnish Radio Symphony with the composer conducting, and a return to Opera de Paris to perform the role of **Leonora Palma** in a new Calixto Bieito production of Thomas Adès’s *The Exterminating Angel*.

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