
Carolyn Sampson

Selected Reviews

BACH St John Passion

Bach Collegium Japan EU Tour (August 2024)

Carolyn Sampson delights, in addition to her angelic smile, with a clear and airy soprano which despite the passage of time has managed to keep all its freshness.

- Patrick Delacour, Olyrix

The pure tone and mellifluous phrasing of leading soprano Carolyn Sampson, the one soloist who was not a Proms debutant, seemed to float effortlessly to the top of the huge building. She ideally matched the two flutes in "Ich folge dir" (I follow thee) and was moving again in her Part Two aria "Zerfließe meine Herze" (Dissolve, my heart). Sampson sings music of all eras, but her vocal qualities seem especially well suited to Baroque music.

- Roy Westbrook, Bachtrack

CD – Mahler 8

BIS Records – Minnesota Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä (December 2023)

Sampson emerges as the star of the show; she is one of the most versatile sopranos on the scene, and she is not known much in music of this heft, but she sounds great.

- James Manheim, *All Music*

CD – But I like to sing...

BIS Records – Carolyn Sampson, Joseph Middleton (November 2023)

This is, extraordinarily, Sampson's 100th recording, and it rises to the occasion. With the ever simpatico Joseph Middleton at her side, the soprano takes us on an immaculately sung tour of song with multiple stop-offs including Schubert, Mendelssohn, Richard Strauss, Poulenc, Bernstein and, more recently, Deborah Pritchard and Cheryl Frances-Hoad. What a journey — and what a milestone.

- *The Times*

There's much more besides — a world of repertoire and life packed into a short recital. It's a portrait of an artist who has shown us many faces on those 100 discs but whose voice remains a constant: sweet, flexible, alive to the text. And always intelligent.

- Alexandra Coghlan, *Gramophone Magazine*

Carolyn Sampson has shifted from an early music specialist to one of Britain's finest recital singers. This latest album showcases her radiant soprano in classic German lieder, recherché French chansons and 20th-century Americana.

- *BBC Music Magazine*

Sampson's soprano is naturally bright but she is adept in colouring it as required. Her diction is superb.

- *Opera Now*

We don't really have the opportunity to listen to Carolyn Sampson in these more romantic repertoires, she whose main work has focused on baroque music... It is therefore a very rare little gem that is offered to us here, a record with serene objectives: joy, light and, through its charm and elegance, like a breath of hope for those who still want to

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believe in the spirit in this world.

- Rtbf

Médée, Charpentier

Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden (November 2023)

Carolyn Sampson als Créuse geht in der Sterbeszene ihrer Partie zu Herzen

Carolyn Sampson as Créuse touches the heart in her role's death scene

– **Andreas Göbel, RBB Kultur**

diese letzte Arie der Dahinsiechenden, die wie eine Art von Liebestod aus ihrer Kehle leise, leiser und am leisesten verklang, empfand ich als den musikalisch absoluten Höhepunkt der Aufführung!

this last aria of the wasting away, which came out of her like a kind of lovesickness I felt that the way the throat faded quietly, quieter and at its quietest was the absolute musical highlight of the performance!

- **Kultur Extra**

With a silvery timbre that contrasted beautifully with her rival's darker hues, Sampson was teasing, seductive and moving by turns, her farewell duo with Jason a thing of the utmost beauty.

- **Carlos María Solare, Opera Magazine**

Médée, Charpentier (Barcelona Concert)

Berlin Staatsoper Unter den Linden (November 2023)

Carolyn Sampson, finora qui sempre vista in sessioni da camera, delineava una Creusa ben degna della sua rivale in amore e la scena della morte quasi sulla fine dell'opera (atto quinto) ha rappresentato un altro grande momento di "dramma in musica" della serata.

Carolyn Sampson, until now always seen here in chamber sessions, outlined a Creusa well worthy of her rival in love and the death scene near the end of the opera (act five) represented another great moment of "drama in music" of the evening.

- **Jorge Binaghi, Connessi all'Opera**

Soprano lírico-ligera Carolyn Sampson result conmovedora en sus acentos puros, ingenuos, que poco a poco se eprcata del drama y destacó en su encena final, en la que se sonsume poco a poco, con un cetro y agudos pulidos, naturalísimos y una dicción impecable

Light-lyric soprano Carolyn Sampson was moving in its pure, naïve accents, slowly becoming aware of the drama, and stood out in its final scene, in which it slowly burns down, with a polished center and highs, very natural and impeccable diction.

- **Josep Subira, Scherzo**

Recital with Joe Middleton

New Town Concerts - Queens Hall, Edinburgh (October 2023)

Carolyn used the whole range and power of her voice tonight from her delicate delivery of Schubert's 'An die Musik' to the very modern sounds of 'Parfum de l'instant' by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho.

– **Hugh Kerr, Edinburgh Music Review**

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CD: *Sounds and Sweet Airs: A Shakespeare Songbook*

BIS RECORDS, Carolyn Sampson, Roderick Williams and Joseph Middleton (August 2023)

Arne's charming song suits Sampson – still the freshest, prettiest soprano voice around – down to the ground; her trilling, liquid birdsong creates a thoughtful dialogue with Gurney's setting.

– Alexandra Coghlan, *Gramophone Magazine*

One little gem is Sampson's tender performance of Haydn's 'She Never Told Her Love'.

– R Moore, *American Record Guide*

Elijah, Handel

BBC Proms (July 2023)

Lustrous solos, however, from Carolyn Sampson

– Richard Morrison, *The Times*

Carolyn Sampson and Rowan Pierce – both known for their accounts of 18th century works – brought a refreshingly clear and bell-like intensity to the two soprano parts; Sampson's account of 'Hear ye, Israel' was packed with creamy expression, ending in a gorgeously floated 'For I, thy God...'.
– Barry Creasy, *MusicOMH*

When sopranos Carolyn Sampson and Rowan Pierce and mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston joined together for that angelic trio their sound was so spotless and tender you couldn't help but be melted.
– Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

Out of Her Mouth

Dunedin Consort (July 2023)

Carolyn Sampson's Judith combines lithe sensuality with steely determination – Simon Thompson, *The Times*

Carolyn Sampson brought both the creaminess and power of her voice to a bravura portrayal, deploying a sarcastic edge for the recitative 'Hurry, someone make him shut up', a little unsteadily drunken portamento for 'He's closing his eyes', the quietest pianissimo for 'It is time', and a triumphant full-on tone for 'She strikes the fatal blow' and the triple time 'Sing and dance and be glad in the power we had'.
– Barry Creasy, *MusicOMH*

Sampson's conveying of the vengeance, power, shock and grief experienced by this complex figure was palpable, resulting in several audible gasps at the end of her final scene.
– Miranda Heggie, *theartsdesk*

CD: *You Did Not Want For Joy*

DEUX-ELLES, Carolyn Sampson, Matthew Wadsworth (July 2023)

It's ravishing, the balance of lushness and simplicity perfectly judged in Sampson's delivery. Sampson's sweet, true soprano is on home ground with the early repertoire.
– Alexandra Coghlan, *Gramophone Magazine*

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CD: Elysium

BIS RECORDS, Carolyn Sampson and Joseph Middleton (April 2023)

Sampson is at her best in the nocturnal 'Nacht und Träume', with a masterly balance of word articulation and legato line. Few singers so effectively build the tension of a song with a slow expansion of tone, especially in the sublime 'Du bist die Ruh'. It seems that the more she records, the better she gets. **- David Patrick Stearns, Gramophone**

Sampson has a natural intimacy to her voice.

Sampson has plenty of swashbuckling drive, complete with punchy accents and crisp diction.

- Myron Silberstein, Fanfare

Stabat Mater, Pergolesi

Les Violons du Roy, Quebec and Montreal (November 2022)

Carolyn Sampson est vraiment une chanteuse que nous aimons voir ici. [...] il semble que rien ne peut lui arriver, et tout est implacablement juste, bien placé, bien exprimé et de bon goût. On lui doit le grand moment de la soirée, le « Vidit suum » du Stabat Mater de Pergolèse, où, sur « dum emisit spiritum », elle semble elle-même rendre son dernier souffle, notamment à la reprise.

Carolyn Sampson really is a singer that we like here. [...] it seems that nothing can fluster her, and that everything is impeccable, well placed, well expressed and in good taste. To her we owe the greatest moment of the evening, the "Vidit suum" from Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, on "dum emisit spiritum" she seemed herself to take her final breaths, notably in the reprise

- Christophe Huss

Handel's Jephtha (Iphis)

Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart (October 2022)

The fabulous voices of soprano Carolyn Sampson and countertenor Time Mead ensnare each other in a variety of embellishments in the grand duet of Act I.

- Markus Dippold, Stuttgarter Zeitung

Carolyn Sampson and Tim Mead fill this scene with bravura and an artful sparkle.

- Deithof Serweck, Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung

CD HUGO WOLF: Italienisches Liederbuch

BIS RECORDS, Carolyn Sampson, Allan Clayton and Joseph Middleton (August 2022)

Both Clayton and Sampson – the latter capable of a vast range of utterance, from the humorously teasing to the tender and even scornful, from pure-toned to full-throated – bring out the enormous range of feeling captured in these miniature masterpieces.

- Europadisk

Sampson[’s] voice is bright and pellucid, and her intelligence always shines through.

- Hugo Shirley, Gramophone Magazine

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CD: The Heath Quartet: Berg, Webern, Schoenberg
Signum Records, The Heath Quartet, Carolyn Sampson (SIGCD712 / July 2022)

The quartet is joined by Carolyn Sampson for the last two movements, and what a contribution she makes: her crystal-clear soprano complements the string sound quite beautifully, though where required there's also a thrilling weight to the sound which I'd never heard this singer summon before...

- Katherine Cooper, *Presto Music*

La soprano intervé en el tercer moviment cantant «Litanei» ('Lletania'), de Stefan George, un moviment molt difícil d'una gran dificultat interpretativa que Sampson resol amb una esplèndida elegància. En el quart i últim moviment, netament atonal, la soprano anglesa transmet amb gran distinció la poesia tremendament dolorosa de George: «I feel [...] darkness».

Translation: The soprano intervenes in the third movement singing "Litanei" ('Litany'), by Stefan George, a very difficult movement of great interpretative difficulty that Sampson solves with splendid elegance. In the fourth and last movement, purely atonal, the English soprano conveys with great distinction George's tremendously painful poetry: "I feel the air of another planet / the friendly faces that were turned toward me / but lately, now are fading into darkness".

- Joseph Bosch, *Sonograma*

Sampson's warm lyricism is ideal both in the slow movement where Schoenberg's grief at the tragic events unfolding around him finds its deepest expression.

- Misha Donat, *BBC Music Magazine*

"in the Schoenberg, a deeply lyrical Sampson capture[s] the extraordinary intensity"

- Dan Cairns, *The Times, Best Albums of 2022*

"Carolyn Sampson is also admirable here, her diction, musical intelligence, phrasing and tonal variation are exceptional, as is this recording."

- Robert Matthew-Walker, *Musical Opinion*

"Here, and again in the finale, Carolyn Sampson stays just the right side of a no-holds-barred operatic style"

- Arnold Wittal, *Gramophone*

CD: TRENNUNG: Songs of Separation
BIS Records, Carolyn Sampson and Kristian Bezuidenhout (March 2022)

Everything about this recording declares perfection ... Sampson's decades of experience and total ease with vocal ornamentation provide one unexpected delight after the other ... Sampson and Bezuidenhout grace us with [an] authentic version, in which ornamentation speaks as strongly as *rallentando*. It's marvelous, as is Sampson's delightful little fizz of vibrato at the end of appropriate phrases in other songs. *Trennung's* capper, Haydn's solo cantata "Arianna a Naxos," rivals the best.

- Jason Victor Serinus, *Stereophile*

Carolyn Sampson is een begenadigd verteller die nooit verveelt en alles met een uniek mooie stemkleur en perfecte dictie overbrengt, daarbij gesteund door Kristian Bezuidenhout, een musicus met dezelfde grote klasse.

Translation: "Carolyn Sampson is a gifted storyteller who never gets bored and conveys everything with a uniquely beautiful voice colour and perfect diction, supported by Kristian Bezuidenhout, a musician of the same great class."

- Sylvia Broecker, *Klara*

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"[Carolyn Sampson] presents every song as being delivered by a well-drawn protagonist, and emerges as a master storyteller in one of her most emotionally direct performances on disk." - **David Patrick Stearrs, *Gramophone***

"Carolyn Sampson enthralingly unfold the tale of shipwrecked love"

"The phrases of *Lied der Trennung* are tenderly ornamented and sung with deep pathos by Sampson"

"Sampson's beguiling, luminous voice, with immaculate German and elegant delivery, is perfectly matched by Bezuidenhout's endlessly inventive imagination." - **Natasha Loges, *BBC Music Magazine* *******

"Given the musicians involved, it should come as no surprise to learn that 'Trennung' is an immaculately crafted and beautifully performed album. [...] Sampson's signature brightness of timbre in her higher register, coupling/contrasting with her ability to introduce earthier flavours of stress or sensuality, especially slightly lower down the scale."

- **Art Muse London**

HANDEL Messiah

Orchestra of St Luke's, Carnegie Hall & Bernard Labadie (April 2022)

"Joshua Blue, a tenor stepping in for the ill Andrew Staples, had a consistent brightness — much like his fellow soloist, the soprano Carolyn Sampson, who after warming up bounded through runs with skillful control and enunciation."

- **Joshua Barone, *New York Times***

HANDEL Messiah

Handel & Haydn Society, Boston & Harry Christophers (November 2021)

"Soprano Carolyn Sampson cast an angelic vocal presence in her featured moments. She managed the quick vocal turns of "Rejoice greatly" with dexterity, her smooth tone bringing soft repose in the middle section. "I know that my redeemer liveth" was just as affecting, her warm, glowing voice conveying a sense of self-assuredness in the text's statement of faith."

- **Aaron Keebaugh, *Boston Classical Review***

"Carolyn Sampson delivered perfectly supported and well-projected vocalisms over a wide dynamic range, angelic and consoling and prophetic by turns."

- **Lee Eiseman, *The Boston Musical Intelligencer***

CD: CANTELOUBE: Chants d'Auvergne

Tapiola Sinfonietta & Pascal Rophé, BIS Records (released Oct 2021)

"...few can match Sampson's overall sense of exuberant joy in these wonderful songs [...] Her characterisation is superb, elated in 'Lo calhe' (The Quail), playfully coquettish in 'Tchut, tchut' (Shush, shush), yet unaffectedly tender in 'Brezairola' (Lullaby)."

- **Michael Beek, *BBC Music Magazine***

"Sampson's soprano is bright and coquettish, [...]. There is plenty of character and expression to her singing, notably in the Trois Bourrées [...]. Sampson gets her tongue around the notoriously difficult-to-learn Auvergne dialect, derived from Occitan, nimbly."

- **Mark Pullinger, *Gramophone***

"*Chanteuse rompue à tous les genres musicaux et à l'aise du baroque aux répertoires du XXe siècle, l'Anglaise Carolyn*

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Sampson séduit par la plastique superbe de son timbre et sa musicalité naturelle. Elle incarne, sans surjouer ces chansons traditionnelles si magnifiquement harmonisées et orchestrées par Canteloube."

Translation: "A singer familiar with all musical genres and at ease from baroque to 20th century repertoires, the Englishwoman Carolyn Sampson seduces with the superb plasticity of her tone and her natural musicality. She embodies, without overplaying these traditional songs so magnificently harmonized and orchestrated by Canteloube."

- **Pierre-Jean Tribot, Crescendo Magazine**

"Carolyn Sampson [...] aborde ce répertoire avec une évidente sincérité, beaucoup de probité, un respect fidèle des indications, un timbre lumineux et une maîtrise impeccable des grandes lignes mélodiques que Canteloube recueillit sur le terrain avant de les sertir dans une instrumentation virtuose."

Translation: "Carolyn Sampson [...] approaches this repertoire with obvious sincerity, a lot of probity, a faithful respect for indications, a luminous timbre and an impeccable mastery of the main melodic lines that Canteloube collected in the field before setting them in a virtuoso instrumentation."

- **Charles Sigle, Forum Opera**

"Carolyn Sampson is on terrific form. Her diction is excellent and the sheer sound of her voice gave me consistent pleasure. Set 1 opens the disc in winning fashion. In 'La pastoura als camps' (The Shepherdess in the Fields) she gaily relates the story, singing characterfully but with a pleasing lightness of touch. [...] Equally persuasive is her account of 'La delaissado' (The Deserted One). [...] Ms Sampson captures the melancholy of the music perfectly. This is one of the outstanding performances in the programme."

Carolyn Sampson is a delightful and highly engaging soloist. She sings the slow, lyrical songs beautifully, investing words and music with great feeling. She's just as successful in the quick, witty numbers; in these you can tell that she's singing with a smile on her face. Her diction is admirably clear and though I'm no expert in the pronunciation of the Auvergnois dialect, what I heard corresponded with what I expected to hear as I followed the texts in the booklet. Ms Sampson's partnership with Pascal Rophé and the Tapiola Sinfonietta is a conspicuous success."

- **John Quinn, Music Web International**

PERGOLESÌ Stabat Mater & STRAVINSKY Pulcinella BBC Proms (August 2021)

"...we were rewarded with some remarkably beautiful singing: [...] Sampson and Mead have great reserves of sweetness in their voices and the ability to make long notes bloom as they progress."

- **David Karlin, Bachtrack**

"Her voice was, as always, a model of beauty combined with style...[...] possibly the most beautiful moments came in Sampson's 'Sancta mater', her slurs astonishingly accurate."

- **Colin Clarke, Seen and Heard**

Recital with Roderick Williams & Joe Middleton Leeds Lieder (June 2021)

"Soprano Carolyn Sampson and baritone Roderick Williams intelligently and humorously challenged perceptions (perhaps by people of a certain age) that it's not possible for music written for one gender, to be performed by another. It is, and they did. Brilliantly."

- **Colin Petch, Northern Soul**

"It was a cleverly devised, beautifully polished programme."

- **Andrew Clements, The Guardian**

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SCHUBERT Elysium

with Joe Middleton, Wigmore Hall (May 2021)

"Sampson sang with a silvery purity, producing some lovely line alongside fine words [...]. Sampson was able to give us many different incarnations of joy and wonder, along with a sense of essential goodness and almost simplicity, yet the result when combined with Middleton's piano created a complex mix."

"The sheer joy which both artists seem to have in performing this music to a live audience really conveyed itself."

- Robert Hugill, *Planet Hugill*

CD: SCHUMANN Album fur Die Frau

with Joseph Middleton, BIS Records (released April 2021)

"Sampson's light bright timbre touches the heart..." - Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times* (Album of the week)

"Sampson audibly delights [...] her voice retains its brilliant clarity throughout, but runs through various shades in line with the narrative."

- Art Muse London

"Amid formidable recorded competition, Sampson is close to the top of the *Frauenliebe* pantheon."

- Richard Patrick Stearns, *Gramophone* (This Week's Essential New Albums)

"Carolyn Sampson is an amazing artist in full bloom, with the confidence not to over-interpret and to let simpler elements speak for themselves. There is ardour when necessary, but also the freshness of youth as appropriate. She has the wonderful gift of making nothing routine, while not imposing on the music but showing forth its own merits."

- Michael Wilkinson, *MusicWeb International*

"Sampson produces a gorgeous sound and reduces the Frau's feelings exceptionally well eager anticipation, bliss, and despair. [...] This program is so carefully planned and so superbly performed that even hard-core purists might admit that nothing is taken from *Frauenliebe und leben* and much is added to enlarge and enrich its narrative. I found it captivating."

- R. Moore, *American Record Guide*

BACH B Minor Mass

Academy of Ancient Music and VOCES8, London Spring Festival (March 2021)

"There are many ways to tackle Bach, although in the Covid era leaner forces are inevitably favoured [...] Carolyn Sampson [...] bolstered some of the choruses, blending seamlessly yet adding welcome firepower when needed."

- Rebecca Franks, *The Times*

PERGOLES! Stabat Mater

Arcangelo, Wigmore Hall, streaming (March 2021)

"Sampson relished individual details of the hymn's text [...]. Musing on Jesus yielding up his spirit, her vocal strength movingly faded alongside but was always secure with pitch and precision. She was equally lovely in the final duet, shutting her eyes on the word "paradise" as if channelling some private vision of the afterlife."

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- Geoff Brown, *The Times*

"The highlight of Carolyn Sampson's singing was in the fifth movement, where here razor-sharp tuning and brilliantly introduced vibrato was masterful."

- Bernard Hughes, *The Arts Desk*

CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD Six Songs of Melmoth with Joseph Middleton, Oxford Lieder Festival (October 2020)

"Sampson travelled carefully through various bodies and centuries, singing securely against jumpy, brittle lines from the piano, carefully etched out by Middleton [...] the climactic Serenade, with Sampson appearing both as the seducer and the seduced, leaves a satisfying chill."

- Neil Fisher, *The Times*

CD: BACH St Matthew Passion Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki, BIS Records (released February 2020)

"Carolyn Sampson is excellent for Suzuki, her *"Aus Liebe"* in Part 2 one of the set's highlights."

- Graham Rickson, *The Arts Desk*

"Carolyn Sampson floats a gloriously gravity-free *'Aus liebe'*."

- Paul Riley, *BBC Music Magazine*

"...there's excellent work from Carolyn Sampson (*Aus Liebe*)."

- Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times (Album of the Week)*

"English soprano Carolyn Sampson's lucid, agile tone is a delight (*Ich will dir mein Herze schenken*)."

- Tony Way, *Limelight Magazine*

DUTILLEUX Correspondances BBC Scottish symphony Orchestra (Donald Runnicles), Glasgow City Halls (February 2020)

"Sung with luminous perfection and beautiful diction by Carolyn Sampson."

- Keith Bruce, *Herald Scotland*

"In her first performance of these, Sampson embraced this counterpoint of brooding introspection and flights of ecstasy with probing versatility, echoed in Runnicles' unsentimentally fluid shaping of the orchestral canvas. [...] gloriously visceral performance."

- Ken Walton, *The Scotsman*

CD: MAHLER Symphony No. 4 Minnesota Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä, BIS Records (released December 2019)

"This is one of the finest Mahler Fours I've ever heard. [...] In the final movement, Carolyn Sampson judges the mood well: as Jeremy Barham notes this is an adult's view of a child's view of heaven, but it sounds knowing but never arch (as Schwarzkopf does occasionally for Klemperer). Heavenly!"

- Greg Keane, *Limelight Magazine*

"In the fourth movement, Carolyn Sampson is the star. Her tone is clear and honest, as Mahler requests, yet we can hear strains of the leisure she is supposedly enjoying in heaven."

- Jonah Pearl, *The Classic Review*

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“Carolyn Sampson in the finale sings fabulously, making the movement the true climax of the entire work.”

- David Hurwitz, *Classics Today*

MOZART Mass in C minor, K. 427

St Louis Symphony Orchestra, Masaaki Suzuki (November 2019)

“Singing Constanze’s music as Soprano I was the amazing British soprano Carolyn Sampson. Sampson’s voice manages to be both pure and rich simultaneously, with a flawless production throughout; she communicates a world of meaning with every phrase.”

- Sarah Bryan Miller, *St Louis Today*

CD: PURCELL King Arthur

Gabrieli Consort, Signum Classics (released October 2019)

“Carolyn Sampson is a stand-out performer [...] Singers’ additions, which stand out gloriously against a plucked-string-only accompaniment, cause amorous solos to ooze desire; Carolyn Sampson’s timbral purity and curvaceous diminutions are an especially heady mix.”

- Berta Joncas, *BBC Music Magazine (5* / Opera Choice)*

“Sampson’s gossamer-like ‘Ye gentle spirits of the air’ [and] Sampson’s heart-rending singing of the *Plaint* is a sublimely attuned dialogue with Christopher Palameta’s soulful oboe.”

- David Vickers, *Gramophone Magazine*

“Carolyn Sampson sings a radiant invocation to the “*Fairest Isle*” that provides a fitting paean to the nation.”

- Richard Fairman, *Financial Times*

“The best-known soloists are baritone Roderick Williams and soprano Carolyn Sampson — she is lovely in the two finest arias, *The Plaint* and *Hark The Echoing Air*.”

- Adrian Thrills, *Daily Mail (5*)*

HAYDN Creation

Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Matthew Halls (May, 2019)

“Carolyn Sampson's soprano glowed on top, and she sang most expressively.”

- Scott Cantrell, *Dallas News*

CD: ‘REASON IN MADNESS’

with Joseph Middleton, BIS Records (released April 2019)

“[...] a brilliantly assembled exploration of how female madness has fascinated male poets and composers. Their programme takes in responses to Shakespeare, Goethe and others by composers including Strauss, Schumann, Brahms, Koechlin, Wolf and Duparc, all performed with Sampson’s wonted freshness of tone, superb control and subtle sensuality, with Middleton offering vibrant support.”

- Erica Jeal, *The Guardian*

“[...] this repertory suits Sampson wonderfully well. Her silvery tone suggests fragility from the outset, while her restrained way with words admirably conveys the vagaries of desire, distress and confusion. She makes a fine Ophelia,

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both in Strauss's manic-depressive songs and in Brahms's lesser-known Ophelia Lieder, with their eerie snatches of half-remembered folk music. The ease and brilliance of her upper registers, meanwhile, are heard to fine effect in her passionate performance of 'Gretchen am Spinnrade', while Koechlin's 'Hymne a Astarté' genuinely startles with its fearsome ascents into the stratospheres.”

- **Tim Ashley, *Gramophone Magazine***

BERLIOZ Les nuits d'été

Scottish Chamber Orchestra, François Leleux (February 2019)

“The soprano Carolyn Sampson made a marvellous soloist for Berlioz's Les nuits d'été, her purity of tone matched by her dramatic ability to inhabit the spirit of each song in the cycle as though it were a perfectly contained world.”

- **Simon Thompson, *The Times***

HANDEL “Abbandonata: Italian Cantatas”

The King's Consort, Robert King, Vivat (December 2018)

“Her instrument is glorious and her readings exquisitely crafted [...] This new recording exemplifies Sampson's rare sensibility, as both performer and intellectual. [...] in Abbandonata Sampson plumbs fresh expressive depths.”

- **Berta Joncus, *BBC Music Magazine***

“The highlight comes early: Sampson is hard put to better the stunning intensity of the disc's second track, Ah! crudele, from the best-known cantata, Armida abbandonata, though the drama of the longer Agrippina condotta a morire runs it close, full of vicious recriminations, as the empress is led to her death, which elide the differences between arias and recitatives with passionate conviction.”

- **Nicholas Kenyon, *The Guardian***

“Sampson is superb and invokes sympathy and awe, especially when vainly attempting to convince the elements to wreak revenge upon the man she loves. [...] Agrippina condotta a morire is the most ambitious and elaborate cantata here, Sampson's portrayal of a ruthless Roman empress as witty as it is exciting. She can do it all, invoking fear, fury and sympathy, her voice retaining its allure even when she's singing at full tilt.”

- **Graham Rickson, *The Arts Desk***

“Carolyn Sampson remains one of the UK's finest singers; she has recorded Handel successfully for BIS and Vivat, and this most recent Vivat release is a clear winner. The sadness of the aria “Ah! Crudele” from Armida abbandonata HWV105 is remarkable. [...] Sampson's decorations of line in the opening aria include perfect trills, anticipating Handel's extensive use of them in the instrumental parts of the central part of this da capo aria. Her legato, too, matches any instrument who dares to double her. [...] Carolyn Sampson is magnificent, raw in “Rendo cenere il tiranno,” infinitely touching in “Come, O Dio!” where her plangent vibratoless sustained notes speak volumes. Sampson's breathless way with the brief aria “Su lacerate” is brilliantly exciting [...]this is a prime release.”

- **Colin Clarke, *MusicWeb International***

MAHLER Symphony No.4

Minnesota Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä (June 2018)

“The symphony's finale is a song depicting a child's idyllic experiences of heaven, often performed in ways that seem either too knowingly adult or exaggeratedly infantile. The soprano Carolyn Sampson walked that particular interpretive tightrope with insouciance. Stationed in an unorthodox position on a rear-stage riser beside the trumpets, she looked and sounded ethereal [...]”

- **Terry Blain, *Star Tribune***

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“Smoothly gliding between openness and restraint, Sampson helped bring the season’s final program to a sweet conclusion. To borrow from the movement’s text, her angelic voice gladdened my senses.”

- Rob Hubbard, *St Paul’s Pioneer Press*

**CD: SCHUBERT ‘A Soprano’s Schubertiade’
BIS Records (released May 2018)**

“There can be no argument with the statement that Carolyn Sampson is one of the great singers of our time [...] This is a wonderful recording, demonstrating from both performers their customary probing intelligence and sensitive insight. Carolyn Sampson is blessed by the rare combination which blends such thoughtfulness with beauty of voice and diction. [...] If this does not figure highly as a disc of the year, there is no justice. It is one that will move the listener beyond admiration to love.”

- Michael Wilkinson, *MusicWeb-International*

“It’s a sign when you have to finish listening a complete disc of single songs because each one makes you long for the next. And because the singing is so wonderful, even the most celebrated pieces seem so much more beautiful than you remembered them. The British soprano Carolyn Sampson – crystal-clear timbre, each syllable audible – has made a name with recital discs that are more than a compilation of songs. A Soprano’s Schubertiade too is such an intelligent album. [...] It doesn’t take more than piano and voice to tell everything. Schubert knew that and this is stressed with a golden pen on Sampson’s first Schubert album.”

- Micha Spel, *NRC Handelsblad*

BACH/HANDEL

Helsinki Baroque Orchestra (January 2018)

“Three and a half minutes of bliss. [...] the soprano Carolyn Sampson and the trumpeter Nicholas Emmerson breathed into the long, radiant phrases of Handel’s *Eternal Source of Light Divine*, gliding effortlessly over the summer meadow haze of the strings of the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra. [...] Sampson’s unforced agility, smiling tone and exquisitely spun phrasing in Bach’s cantata *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen* (BWV51) gave pep and brilliance.”

- Anna Picard, *The Times*

PURCELL

The King’s Consort (October 2017)

“Sampson looked and sounded the epitome of elegance and expressiveness. Her smoothly polished soprano is a perfect fit for Purcell’s melodic fecundity. The tone was clear as a bell, the diction superb: the words seemed to float on the melody. And, the purity and easefulness of Sampson’s sound production is wonderfully suited to Purcell’s rhythmic shifts and quirks which were pliantly absorbed into the flowing phrases. Moreover, while Sampson’s tone is unblemished it is never colourless: she imbued the clean line with judicious expressive radiance.”

- Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

**PURCELL/SCHUMANN/QUILTER/MENDELSSOHN *Lost is My Quiet*
with Iestyn Davies, Joseph Middleton, BIS Records (released September 2017)**

“The art of vocal duetting is exemplified at its best in this recital by two of today’s finest British singers [...] applying considerable judgement to their task, the voices of Carolyn Sampson and Iestyn Davies are well matched here in terms of colour and vibrancy – an accomplishment they deliver throughout. [...] highlights include Sampson moving around the

Carolyn Sampson

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notes of Purcell's *If music be the food of love* with impeccable skill, while she makes time stand still in Schumann's *Stille Liebe*." - **BBC Music Magazine (5* Choral & Song Choice)**

"Carolyn Sampson and Iestyn Davies make a symbiotic partnership in these assorted duets, their tone (not least their control of vibrato) and style ideally matched [...] Amid the duets, Sampson sings '*If music be the food of love*' with an easy fluidity and grace. [...] With Middleton always an animated partner, the singers blend melliflously in all those caressing thirds and sixths, with refined phrasing and an unselfconscious charm [...] Sampson's touching simplicity in '*Drink to me only with thine eyes*', and her exuberance and ardour in '*Love's Philosophy*', with the voice soaring gloriously to the song's climax. [...] Here is a captivating, unhackneyed programme, presented by singers – a double act in a thousand – and pianist with a style and allure it would be hard to beat."

- **Richard Wigmore, *Gramophone* (Editor's Choice)**

"Sampson's and Davies's voices blend perfectly, and they sing Britten's realisations of *Sound the Trumpet* and *Lost Is My Quiet* stylishly, but the fleetier Mendelssohn numbers are the real delight." - **Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times***

"Carolyn Sampson's soprano sparkles and Iestyn Davies's countertenor glides through the air in this compilation, individually and in duet. [...] Early in the opening duet, Purcell's *Sound the Trumpet*, Sampson throws out a blingy octave leap that stands out a mile – but it's a moment of exuberance, not a sign of liberties to come."

"From the beautifully interwoven Purcell title track to the mellifluous, dirndl-wearing duets by Mendelssohn and Schumann to the bittersweet drawing-room melodies of Roger Quilter, what's on offer here is beautifully judged, the two voices playing off each other and sharing nuanced expression. They shine in the solos, too, [...] Sampson making something poignantly lovely of Quilter's *Drink to Me Only*." - **Erica Jeal, *The Guardian* (5*)**

"This is an enchanting recital, combining songs and duets using both English and German texts, by two wonderful British singers and a warmly sensitive accompanist. [...] [Iestyn Davies] blending in seamless rapport with the shinningly elegant lyric soprano of Carolyn Sampson [...] while this isn't a competition, Sampson does give him a run for his money in Schumann's *Stille Liebe* and in the more mercurial *Aufträge* and Mendelssohn's *Neue Liebe*. [...] As a final *bonne bouche*, everyone lets their hair down for the catchy and kitschy operetta waltz *Love Calls Through the Summer Night*, bringing this absolutely delicious recording to an upbeat conclusion." - **Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph* (5*)**

CD: JS BACH Cantatas for Soprano

Freiburger Barokorchester, Petra Müllejans; Harmonia Mundi (released April 2017)

"Carolyn Sampson is arguably the most experienced, assured and wide-ranging of current Bach sopranos. With this latest recital she does not disappoint. Sensitivity to the evolving line and projection of text, both of which she manages with warmth and dark-hued reflection, forms a consistent part of her delectable armoury. [...] This is really worth waiting for." - **Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, *Gramophone Magazine***

"...*Mein Herze schwimmt in Blut*, its remorseful, lamenting powers wonderfully expressed here by the English soprano Carolyn Sampson. It's a tribute to her linguistic as well as bright-voiced musical talents that she is the chosen soloist with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra." - **Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

"The soprano Carolyn Sampson and the Freiburger Barokorchester (FBO) interpret soprano cantatas Johann Sebastian Bach on CD. How sensitive and passionate it is! [...] Carolyn Sampson's soprano has the virtuosic quality of a star: which

Carolyn Sampson

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never struggles in the height. A very natural voice which has its base in the lyric center perfectly suited to Bach.”

- Johannes Adam, *Badische Zeitung*

“A jewel of a disc.”

- Jesús Vega, *El Nuevo Herald*

BEETHOVEN Missa Solemnis

Orchestra of the 18th Century, Daniel Reuss (July 2017)

“The soprano Carolyn Sampson sings with a rare mixture of power and purity.”

- Damian Thompson, *The Spectator*

FLEURS

USA Recital tour (May 2017)

“Sampson’s approach to the songs reflected her pedigree as one of our finest early music sopranos. While her technique itself was remarkable — the trills in Britten’s arrangement of Purcell’s “Sweeter than Roses” were as unpretentious, effortless, and wondrous as the act of breathing itself — she chose to communicate primarily by tone rather than word painting. [...] Sampson’s strength and security lower in her range, freshness on high, and delight in singing showed her the rightful successor of the great lieder artists of the past, a great and treasurable artist in her own right.”

- Jason Victor Serinus, *San Francisco Performances*

“Through the roughly hour and a half recital, the duo painted an exemplary picture of all that artistry is capable of. From some subtle seeming sprechgesang in Schumann’s “Röselein, Röselein” to a sultry breathiness in tone in Venezuelan composer Hanh’s “Offrande,” Sampson is a true artist, painting picture after picture from her palate of varying tonal colors and vivid musicality.”

- James Monroe Števkó, *OperaWire*

DEBUSSY Pelleas and Melisande (title role)

Scottish Opera (February 2017)

“Sampson’s delicately coloured tone gets every word across in a wonderfully nuanced way.”

- Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

“...both Andrei Bondarenko and Carolyn Sampson give performances of consummate sensibility and grace.”

- Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph* (5*)

“The leads respond with subtle performances. [...] Sampson sings with a quiet intensity that belies her character’s ethereal appearance.”

- Allan Radcliffe, *The Times*

“Mélisande – a vocally and dramatically triumphant Carolyn Sampson.”

- Susan Nickalls, *The Scotsmen*

“As Melisande, Carolyn Sampson offers tonal delicacy and a credible suggestion of childlike innocence.”

- George Hall, *The Stage*

“Dressed in white, with a voice that (like Debussy’s score) seemed lit from within, she trod a remarkably controlled line between impassive and impulsive; the unignorable focus of every scene in which she appeared.”

Carolyn Sampson

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- Richard Bratby, *The Spectator*

MONTEVERDI Motets

Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr (December 2016)

“Both singers sang throughout with piercing accuracy and clarity, though only Sampson had that warm sensuous quality which really brings Monteverdi to life.”

- Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

“But this superb evening belonged to two sopranos – Carolyn Sampson and Rowan Pierce – whose duets and solos reflected Monteverdi at his most gravely serene. Pierce, being younger, may not yet possess Sampson’s super-refined control of phrasing and dynamics, but their voices made a lovely meld. Monteverdi’s music maintained a graceful equality between them, letting them interlace, echo each other, and at climactic moments soar off solo into the empyrean.”

- Michael Church, *The Independent* (5*)

CD: MOZART Mass in C minor

Exsultate, Jubilate CD Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki, BIS Records (released December 2016)

“...in ‘Et incarnatus est’, the sweetest of the disc’s many ravishing moments, Carolyn Sampson arabesques effortlessly up to the stratosphere in a slow dance with solo woodwinds [...] On what other recording of the Mass do the principal vocalists alter their timbres on demand to perfect their blend? Yet Sampson takes the palm. [...] Sampson’s suave coloratura[...] shows us that Mozart, like Bach, took inspiration from praising God.”

- Berta Joncus, *BBC Music Magazine* (“Recording of the Month” - 5*)

“...above it all, the crystalline beauty of soloist Carolyn Sampson’s soprano, floating like a ministering angel [...] an exhilarating Exsultate, Jubilate with Sampson on top form.”

- Stephen Pritchard, *The Guardian* (5*)

CD: A Verlaine Songbook

with Joseph Middleton, BIS Records (released October 2016)

“The performances are breathtakingly beautiful. As expected from the impeccable Sampson there is some astonishingly pure and precisely controlled vocalism, but lest she be typecast as an early music specialist there has been a perceptible increase in richness and colour over the last few years. Her delivery is mostly intimate and confessional, the full voice used sparingly so at key moments when it opens out and expands the result is spine-tingling. [...] Another first-class release from a dedicated artist with one of the loveliest voices of our time. This is something to savour.”

- Warwick Arnold, *Limelight Magazine* (5*)

“Sampson’s pure, shining tone matches the finesse of this repertoire and her lower range sometimes has the softness and subtle qualities of a deep flute [...] the early Debussy settings are splendidly etched, with a fine mix of deep feeling and objectivity.”

- Jessica Duchon, *BBC Music Magazine* (5*)

“Sampson and Middleton are very much at home in this repertoire, frequently functioning as an indivisible unit with sound and sense beautifully fused [...] texts are scrupulously delivered. She’s in excellent voice too, her tone clear and silvery, her upper registers exquisite [...] Very fine.”

- Tim Ashley, *Gramophone Magazine*

“Sampson adores these songs, caressing the text with her beautiful, pure soprano, particularly those that dwell on the

Carolyn Sampson

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correlation between nature and the emotions. Her partnership with Middleton is inspired.”

- **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer***

“Ms Sampson is a richly endowed guide with a beautiful lyric voice well suited to French melodies: it is flexible, she has a sure feeling for the poetry and she is careful with nuance. [...] Like everything else on this disc, Carolyn Sampson sings them with excellent diction and deep involvement. A garland of roses to everyone concerned.”

- **Göran Forsling, *MusicWeb International***