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# Francesca Chiejina

## Selected Reviews

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### Jo Ann, Michael Tippett's *New Year* Birmingham Opera Company (July 2024)

"Francesca Chiejina is heartachingly good as Jo Ann, her radiant soprano strong and sumptuous."

**Clive Paget, *The Guardian***

"The Birmingham soloists did the composer proud. Francesca Chiejina had the perfect, soaring lyric soprano for Jo Ann"

**Hugh Canning**

"The main roles are all superbly cast, with Francesca Chiejina outstanding musically and dramatically as Jo Ann"

**Clare Stevens, *The Stage***

"The clotted text is given power by a strong cast — notably Francesca Chiejina's Jo Ann"

**Neil Fisher, *The Times***

### Jonathan Dove's '*Odyssey*' (World Premiere) Bristol Beacon (January 2024)

"Francesca Chiejina was not in need of any additional power and impressed inasmuch as the smaller role of The Mother permitted (she bookends the piece, fearing for the welfare of Him and his siblings, whom she has exiled for their safety)."

**David Karlin, *Bachtrack***

### 'Our Indifferent Century' album with Natalie Burch and Fleur Barron Delphian Records (October 2023)

"Francesca Chiejina has the full measure of the work. She is equally at home in the coloratura of the first verse of 'Let the florid music praise!' [On this Island] as she is in the reflective, cantabile second verse. She finds the right tone of irony, and the cheeky, relaxed cabaret/jazzy drawl necessary for the final 'As it is, plenty'."

**William Hedley, *MusicWeb International***

"Chiejina's and Burch's compelling performance is richly mature and painstakingly coloured . . . [her] luxuriant voice always holds our attention."

**Natasha Loges, *BBC Music Magazine***

### 'Transfigured' album with Kaleidoscope Chamber Collective Chandos Records (September 2023)

"Francesca Chiejina's lustrous soprano brings serious class to Zemlinsky's Dehmel setting, and also to Alma Mahler's songs."

**Malcolm Hayes, *BBC Music Magazine***

### Title Role, *Semele* Blackheath Halls Opera (September 2023)

"A complete musical delight"

**Robert Thicknesse, *Opera Now***

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"Francesca Chiejina has a richer voice than we usually hear in the title role, but nimble enough for the coloratura trials of Act 3, and her peachy, self-adoring and sensuous Semele was a treat."

**Hugh Canning, *Opera Magazine***

"Brimming with dramatic power, Francesca Chiejina's luscious voice is definitely heading for darker roles. But she can also float top notes with delicious purity, and has the agility to pull off the marathon *Myself I Shall Adore*."

**David Benedict, *The Stage***

"Francesca Chiejina is vivacious as spirited Semele"

**Claudia Pritchard, *Culture Whisper***

### ***Ein Deutsches Requiem / Wailing Woman* Alexandra Palace Theatre (July 2023)**

"[Wailing Woman] gave us our first hearing of Francesca Chiejina, the evening's exceptional soprano, perfectly summoning up a distillation of sadness and anger." "*And Ye Now Have No Sorrow* was superb: singing from memory, Francesca's performance was rounded and eloquent: her voice never stressed but passionately expressive."

**David Winskill, *HamHigh***

### ***Il Trittico* Scottish Opera (March 2023)**

"The only principal to sing in all three operas was Francesca Chiejina, her Young Lover (*Tabarro*) and her Sister Geovieffa (*Angelica*) constituting a delicious hors d'oeuvre for a beautifully composed and characterized Lauretta (*Schicchi*): this soprano has stage presence and a voice of great promise."

**Andrew Clark, *Opera Magazine***

"Sister Genovieffa – splendidly characterised by Francesca Chiejina – draws our attention when she goes to the window wanting to see the sun shining on the garden below – and her beautifully sung aria marks her out as a star of the future." "Amongst the characters, it is the show-stopping aria of Francesc Chiejina as Lauretta ('O mio babbino caro') which highlights the talent heard earlier in *Suor Angelica*."

**Gregor Tassie, *Seen and Heard International***

"Francesca Chiejina was showstopping in Lauretta's 'O mio babbino caro'"

**David Smythe, *Bachtrack***

"Francesca Chiejina (Lauretta) eschews milking 'O mio babbino caro', the best-known song in the evening, and sings with a forthright winsomeness".

**Catriona Graham, *The Opera Critic***

"*Il Trittico* sports a truly impressive lineup of Scottish Opera debuts, including additional standout ... Francesca Chiejina."

**Rho Chung, *The Skinny***

"Francesca Chiejina sings a gorgeously creamy Lauretta."

**Simon Thompson, *The Times***

"a heart-winning Francesca Chiejina, as both sweet ingenue Sister Geovieffa, and Schicchi's daughter Lauretta complete with a delightful rendition of 'O mio babbino caro'".

**W J Quinn, *The Quintessential Review***

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### **Light of Passage (Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*)** **Royal Ballet (October 2022)**

"With soprano Francesca Chiejina's celestial voice suspended above the orchestra's shimmering, mournful music, you might feel as if you're transcending."

**Lyndsey Winship, *The Guardian***

"McNally, clutching a bundled coat in place of a lost child, enacts a heart-rendering solo to the Virgin's lament for her son powerfully sung (from the pit) by American soprano Francesca Chiejina."

**Louise Leven, *The Financial Times***

In 2017, the Canadian created *Flight Pattern* for the Royal Ballet to the first movement of Henryk Górecki's *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*; now she has returned to add *Covenant* and *Passage* to the last two movements, responding perfectly to the music (conducted by Zoi Tsokanou and sung, beautifully, by Francesca Chiejina). The three sections are separate but linked by the idea of passage.

**Sarah Crompton, *The Guardian***

### **High Priestess, *Aida*** **Royal Opera House (September 2022)**

"Special praise too for the sumptuously sung High Priestess of Francesca Chiejina, a recognisably five-star voice, even if only heard from offstage."

**Clive Page, *Limelight Magazine***

"And three cheers for soprano Francesca Chiejina, never visible but singing off-stage with clarity and mystery as the High Priestess. Hear her again when the Royal Ballet dances the new Crystal Pite full-length work in October and November, to Gorecki's *Symphony No. 3*."

**Claudia Pritchard, *Culture Whisper***

"Francesca Chiejina intoned the offstage Priestess' part to perfection – her silvery voice carrying well into the house."

**Keith McDonnell, *MusicOMH***

### **Mimi, *La bohème*** **Nevill Holt Opera (June 2022)**

"Nigerian-American soprano Francesca Chiejina is a superior Mimi, soaring above the score."

**Lorien Haynes, *The Telegraph***

"Francesca Chiejina has great presence as Mimi with her soprano possessing a very full and rounded tone."

**Sam Smith, *MusicOMH***

"Chiejina is an apt performer to assume this intensifying of the traditional, more passive conception of the character; throughout the performance she fulfils all dramatic and vocal requirements."

**George Hall, *The Stage***

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### **Mimi, *La bohème* English Touring Opera (February – June 2022)**

"... audience who catch Francesca Chiejina on the company's 14-venue tour of England this spring will hear a Mimi as beguiling as any I've encountered in recent years. The Nigerian-American phrased exquisitely and used her silvery soprano to explore the character's vulnerability with an ideal blend of sweetness and melancholy. For a role debut it was enchanting."

**Mark Valencia, *Opera Magazine***

"There's one standout voice, and that is Francesca Chiejina as Mimi. She has a warm, sumptuous tone and plenty of power up top..."

**Richard Morrison, *The Times***

"Though boasting a sumptuous voice . . . Francesca Chiejina is not the sort of soprano who craves being the centre of attention, making her Mimi ideally empathetic. One of the best recent alumnae of Covent Garden's Jette Parker Young Artists Programme, she has the power to ride the orchestra where needed."

**John Allison, *The Telegraph***

"Vocally, Francesca Chiejina outshines all. Her Mimi has a calm core that is heightened by the boisterous bantering and an inner radiance that can't be dimmed by sickness or sadness. 'Sì, mi chiamano Mimi' brings a lovely softness into the artists' attic, and Chiejina and Botelho sing 'O soave fanciulla' with persuasive feeling."

**Claire Seymour, *The Stage***

"Francesca Chiejina stood out as Mimi in a performance that displayed control over an ample instrument; we were treated to some fine pianissimi as Chiejina filed down her voice to the most delicate of threads and there was plenty of tonal variety to lend real character to her role."

**Dominic Lowe, *Bachtrack***

"Chiejina's voice soars gorgeously; her pathos when disease takes hold is properly heart-rending."

**Michael Church, *INews***

"As Mimi, Francesca Chiejina displays her wide range: there is light and shade, power and subtlety and a strong sense of acting through the voice."

**Nick Kimberley, *Evening Standard***

"Francesca Chiejina, making her role debut as Mimi, combined a lovely warm, creamy vocal tone with a sense of reticence but also self-possession. In Act One, she allowed Luciano Botelho's Rodolfo to make the running, but it was a deliberate decision. Their concluding sequence in that act (his aria, her aria, the duet) was beautifully sung, yet also felt quite naturally believable, heightened conversation as it should be."

**Robert Hugill, *Planet Hugill***

"Mimi, who tiny hand is certainly frozen in the bleak setting of the first act, is movingly sung by Francesca Chiejina, who gradually builds the role until by the end she has totally succeeded in making us feel involved with her fate and that of Rodolfo."

**John Groves, *London Theatre One***

"Francesca Chiejina's Mimi was the vocal highlight of the evening and a superlative performance in its own right. She was unerringly precise in intonation and showcased a remarkable range of colors across the voice – not least lower down, with some especially honeyed moments. Soft moments were especially impressive – there is little more exciting than really quiet singing – and could be both glassy and crystalline or tender and silken, depending on the moment. Her very final scene demonstrated an extraordinary level of sustained dynamic control, the volume ebbing and melting away ever so gradually over her final passages. She will surely go from strength-to-strength in this role."

**Benjamin Poore, *Opera Wire***

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### **Melissa, *Amadigi* English Touring Opera (October 2021)**

"The opera's greatness lies in Handel's delineation of Dardano and Melissa as tragic protagonists unrequited in love, and the performances here are strong. Chiejina is exceptional, whether attempting seduction, conjuring up Furies or giving voice to lonely despair."

**Tim Ashely, *The Guardian***

"[Melissa], sung with confidence, beauty of tone, and flexibility by Francesca Chiejina . . ."

**Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times***

"[*Amadigi*] is a more entertaining work than its unfamiliarity may suggest. It's one of Handel's magic operas, its story a typically convoluted mixture of frustrated love affairs, but the dominating role of the sorceress Melissa, well sung by rich-voiced soprano Francesca Chiejina, casts a potent spell throughout (her death scene is musically most original)."

**Richard Fairman, *Financial Times***

"Francesca Chiejina, as Melissa, flouncing around in garish orange, also excelled at following Handel's genius for digging beneath the character's surfaces, making us share the sorceress's own pain at getting nowhere loving Amadigi for herself."

**Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"The most interesting character is Melissa, whose heart is suffused with sorrow and sadness in equal measure – emotions which the Nigerian – American soprano Francesca Chiejina communicates with captivating strength, inspiring scorn and sympathy alike. Chiejina's rich and full-bodied soprano is flexible and easily encompasses the role's wide range, allowing her to capture the emotional extremes between which Melissa fluctuates. Thus, the beseeching phrases of the first section of Melissa's opening aria convey the anguish which Amadigi's rejection afflicts, but such tenderness is swept aside by tempestuousness in the fiery threats that follow. Chiejina's suppleness and gleaming tone at the top serve her well in the fiery rage aria, with obbligato trumpet, that closes Act 2 – a virtuosic exultation in violent savagery. In contrast, her final arioso ebbs painfully, the interpretative details deeply affecting."

**Claire Seymour, *Opera Today***

### **Berg's *Seven Early Songs* Sinfonia of London, BBC Proms (September 2021)**

"Emerging out of the Debussyeian, whole-tone haze at the start of 'Nacht', Chiejina's mellow, liquid flow of sound surged and rippled, easy and unforced in this huge space. This was storytelling from within, voice just another line – sometimes exposed, sometimes concealed – within a constantly shifting orchestral texture: a smudgy chalk-drawing replacing the precision of Strauss's opening pen and ink."

**Alexandra Coghlan, *The Arts Desk***

"Fin-de-siècle Vienna followed, with the crepuscular atmosphere of 'Nacht' from Berg's *Seven Early Songs* replete with memory and portent. Francesca Chiejina was the soprano soloist, her voice glinting with beauty amid the miraculous orchestrations."

**Rebecca Franks, *The Times***

"Francesca Chiejina was the soloist in Berg's *Seven Early Songs*. Hers is a sweetly lyrical voice, secure in all registers, even in the higher tessitura of 'Die Nachtigall'."

**Alexander Hall, *Bachtrack***

"Francesca Chiejina was the soprano . . . the sound itself is exquisite."

**Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***

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### **Freia, *RhineGold***

#### **Birmingham Opera Company (August 2021)**

"The vulnerable Freia, ransom for the giants' non-payment, made more of an impact than usual in Francesca Chiejina's soaring lyricism".

**David Nice, *The Arts Desk***

### **Miss Jessel, *The Turn of the Screw***

#### **Opera GlassWorks (January 2021)**

"Francesca Chiejina's Miss Jessel is opulently sung."

**Mark Pullinger, *Bachtrack***

"Francesca Chiejina's Miss Jessel, her luscious voice heavy with illicit experience and knowledge."

**Alexandra Coghlan, *The Spectator***

"His evil machinations were supported by Francesca Chiejina's Miss Jessel in a velvety and haunting portrayal."

**Benjamin Poore, *Opera Wire***

### **Clara, *Porgy and Bess***

#### **Grange Park Opera (June 2019)**

"Though there are no weak links in the cast, the revelation of the night is the Francesca Chiejina's Clara, vocally luminous with superb diction (there are no surtitles), a wonderfully sympathetic stage presence."

**David Gutman, *The Stage***

"...even though it's virtually the first thing we hear, it's hard to forget the radiance of Francesca Chiejina's Clara when she delivers her peachy Summertime."

**Neil Fisher, *The Times***

"...Francesca Chiejina's lyrically spellbinding Clara..."

**George Hall, *Opera magazine***

"Francesca Chiejina's Clara gave us a heart-stoppingly effective "Summertime" at the start of the evening..."

**Matthew Rye, *Backtrack***

"Some of the other characters are outstanding, in particular Francesca Chiejina (recently one of the Jette Parker Young Artists at the Royal Opera House) as a touching and tender Clara, soaring through 'Summertime'."

**Jessica Duchen, *The Arts Desk***

"Francesca Chiejina gives goosebump-inducing renditions of the opera's big number "Summertime" throughout."

**Fiona Scott, *BroadwayWorld***

"...the standard of singing is very high, with several principals really standing out. As Clara, Francesca Chiejina, a former Royal Opera Jette Parker Young Artist, sings 'Summertime' with a glistening radiance..."

**Sam Smith, *musicOMH***

"Recent graduate of the Jette Parker ROH studio, Francesca Chiejina opens the show with a luminous toned "Summertime", the feeling of ease she captures showing off her vocal prowess. This, teamed with a beautiful stage presence, makes her one to watch—she could certainly hold her own in the title role."

**Louise Lewis, *British Theatre Guide***



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"Francesca Chiejina launches the evening with a radiant 'Summertime'..."

**Richard Fairman, *Financial Times***

**Lady in Waiting, *Macbeth*  
Royal Opera House (April 2018)**

"Francesca Chiejina produced exquisitely shaped phrases and a luminous sound as the Lady-in-Waiting".

**Flora Willson, *Opera Magazine***

**Melantho and Amor, *The Return of Ulysses*  
Royal Opera at the Roundhouse (January 2018)**

"The fluent bass of David Shipley (Antinous) and the pretty soprano of Francesca Chiejina (Melantho) gave special pleasure in an altogether well integrated cast, expertly supported by Christian Curnyn and the Early Opera Company's chamber orchestra."

**Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph***

"The discovery of the evening, and the another 'significant impression', was Francesca Chiejina's simply delicious assumption of Melantho. A Jette Parker Artist, Chiejina acts brilliantly, has phenomenal stage presence, and a voice of gold; all were evident from her assumption of the part of Love at the very outset of the evening. Eminently believable at each and every juncture, always completely focused on the moment dramatically, she is set, I predict, to be a major voice in coming years. She also is blessed by not inconsiderable beauty."

**Colin Clarke, *Seen and Heard International***

"Jette Parker Young Artist Francesca Chiejina was a vibrant, vocally lithe Melantho"

**Claire Seymour, *Opera Today***

"Penelope's servant Melantho and her swain Eurymachus, enchantingly portrayed by Francesca Chiejina, a Jette Parker Young Artist very much on the up"

**Peter Reed, *Classical Source***

"Francesca Chiejina as a vivacious, clear-voiced Melantho"

***Bachtrack***

"Jette Parker Young Artist Programme's wonderful young soprano Francesca Chiejina, so good in last summer's showcase"

**David Nice, *The Arts Desk***

**Micaela, *La Tragédie de Carmen*  
Royal Opera at Wilton's Music Hall (November 2017)**

"Micaela's passionate plea to Don Jose then plunges us into the heart of that sound world, all the more powerfully thanks to soprano Francesca Chiejina's luminous sound."

**Michael Church, *The Independent***

"Micaela's sentimental music shows Francesca Chiejina's gorgeously warm and fluently produced soprano to advantage, earning her the audience's biggest applause"

**Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph***

"The most heartfelt singing comes from the Micaela of Francesca Chiejina, giving her all to the plot's flimsiest character."

**Geoff Brown, *The Times***