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# Helen Charlston

## Selected Reviews

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Handel Partenope (Rosmira), Les Arts Florissants, Thiré & Lucerne (August 2021)

"...the versatile British mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston as his golden-toned lover, the spurned but dignified Rosmira."  
- Fiona Maddocks, The Observer\*\*\*\*\*

"Exceptional projection and beautiful temperament in the contralto Helen Charlston whose homogeneous timbre and a striking depth bring a beautiful authority to the perilous "Un'altra volta ancor".  
- Philippe Ramin, Bachtrack\*\*\*\*\*

"Helen Charlston has a superb, solidly seated contralto voice. The role of Rosmira / Eurimène seems to be tailor-made for her, as her expressions are appropriate to the character."  
- Victoria Okada, Vivace Cantabile\*\*\*\*\*

Isolation Songbook, Delphian DCD34253 (March 2021)

"For her debut album, Helen Charlston invited composers to 'bear witness' to the period of isolation. With a programme that is wide-reaching and runs the gamut of human emotion, this is a powerful momento for us all."  
- Freya Parr, BBC Music Magazine\*\*\*\*

"...a recital that's hard to resist, at once fresh and profoundly familiar... Also striking is Stephen Bick's Milton setting 'On his Blindness', its elegiac, Tallis-infused lyricism a showcase for the stern beauty of Charlston's mezzo and her legato phrasing."  
- Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone

"Witty and touching in equal measure, this personal but deeply relatable lockdown project from a young husband-and-wife-to-be stemmed from Owain Park's appropriately bitter-sweet setting of a poem which Charlston wrote for her fiancé to mark what would have been their wedding-day last year. Other highlights include Joshua Borin's darkly funny Nature is Returning (sung with savage brilliance by Charlston)"  
- Katherine Cooper, Presto Classical

Bach St John Passion, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Battersea Arts Centre (March 2021)

"Helen Charlston took the most tragic aria of the piece Es ist Vollbracht (It is Finished) at a daringly slow pace, but thanks to her thrilling intense tone and expressive moulding of the line it paid off."  
- Ivan Hewett, The Telegraph\*\*\*\*\*

CD: Eccles Semele (Juno), Academy of Ancient Music, AAM012 (January 2021)

"Richard Burkhard and Helen Charlston mine some divine comic scenes as the king of the gods and his jealous wife Juno."  
- Richard Fairman, Financial Times\*\*\*\*

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"Semele's implacable rival Juno should steal the show whenever she appears. From her imperious opening entry to her rollicking final aria of triumph, her tone dripping with venomous glee, Helen Charlston does not miss a trick."  
- Gramophone

"Some of the best moments fall to jealous, scheming Juno, whose scenes spring to life more readily than some of the others; the role is dispatched here with brilliant imperiousness by Helen Charlston."  
- Erica Jeal, The Guardian\*\*\*\*\*

"...but it's Helen Charlston's Juno who gets both her man and the laurels by the end – deliciously ferocious in her musical vengeance."  
- Alexandra Coghlan, Limelight\*\*\*\*\*

"Dark-timbred mezzo Helen Charlston's Juno flares magnificently, unafraid to sound ugly when furious."  
- BBC Music Magazine (Recording of the month)

"Helen Charlston is impressive as Juno: her commanding 'Somnus, arise' and jaunty duet with Somnus, 'Away let us haste' are real highlights."  
- Colin Clarke, Rhinegold

"There are few calls for vocal display... 'Above measure is the pleasure', being a rare exception that allows the excellent Helen Charlston a brief opportunity to show her mettle in this regard... richly formidable Juno"  
- Opera Magazine

### Bach Christmas Oratorio, Gabrieli **Consort & Players, St John's Smith Square (December 2020)**

"The mezzo Helen Charlston's Virgin was sober in her joy – the dark beauty of her tone balanced by purity of line."  
- Alexandra Coghlan, iNews\*\*\*\*\*

CD Recording: Dussek Messe solemnelle, Choir and Orchestra of the Academy of Ancient Music (October 2020)

"...fine performance from the well-balanced quartet of soloists ... A hugely worthwhile discovery of an unknown work"  
- Hugh Canning, The Sunday Times

### Eccles Semele (Juno), Cambridge Handel Opera Company (November 2019)

"All the vocal soloists were excellent... The mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston did full justice to the role of the furious Juno, full of spiteful passion, her coloratura passages proving her to be the real prima donna here."  
- Sandra Bowdler, Opera Magazine

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An Elizabethan Christmas, Fretwork, Wigmore Hall (December 2019)

"Out of the orient crystal skies' saw Helen Charlston, replacing a previously advertised Elin Manahan Thomas, reveal a clear voice that glistened, with its obvious strength never generating too thick a sound. The lines of the piece seemed so smooth that it felt rather more modern than it actually is, although the final utterance of 'falantindingdido' grounded it very much in its time. In 'From Virgin's womb' of 1589, with words by Francis Kindlemarsh, the line through the word 'Rejoice' very much came to the fore, while 'Lullaby' of 1588 really showed off Charlston's credentials as a mezzo-soprano. ... For sheer beauty the highlight may well have been Charlston's performance of the anonymous 'Sweet was the song'..."

- Sam Smith, MusicOMH\*\*\*\*\*

Handel Venceslao (Lucinda), Opera Settecento, London Handel Festival (April 2019)

"As a poised Lucinda, Helen Charlston's distinctive mezzo stood out" - Rebecca Franks, The Times

"Helen Charlston as Lucinda revealed a mezzo-soprano whose fullness was complemented by a pleasing edge." - Sam Smith, MusicOMH

"Helen Charlston expressed steadiness and determination that helped, at least at the musical level, to make sense of her motivations." - Curtis Rogers, Classical Source

Bach St John Passion, Polyphony, **OAE, St John's Smith Square (April 2019)**

"Helen Charlston has a remarkable technique and dignified presence, and her singing of 'Von den Stricken meiner Sünden' gave a fine example of both" - Melanie Eskenazi, MusicOMH

Bach Cantatas Nos 106 & 182, Amici Voices, CDA68275 (February 2019)

"The highlight is Helen Charlston's mesmerising delivery of 'Leget Euch'... lovingly accompanied by the flautist Ashley Solomon." - Jonathan Freeman Attwood, Gramophone

'Venus Unwrapped'; **Strozzi & Monteverdi**, OAE, Kings Place (January 2019)

"Helen Charlston's rich, solid, sensuous contralto, and David Shipley's fantastically sonorous basso profundo stood out. Particularly enjoyable was Le tre Gratie a Venere, which featured Allen, Charlston and Zoe Brookshaw in a trio that followed the classic early-baroque model of nimble, pinging phrases that, after abrupt cessation, moved into prolonged, winding suspension-filled cadences."

- Barry Creasy, MusicOMH

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Bach St Matthew Passion, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra (October 2018)

"For her part, Charlston was able to bring a surprising amount of vocal richness to the remarkable series of arias in the second half. She was also suitably haunting in "Erbarme dich" and displayed soul-wrenching phrasing in a particularly intense "Können Tränen"."

- Simon Holden, Bachtrack\*\*\*\*

Bach Mass in B minor, Tilford Bach Society & The London Handel Orchestra **St John's Smith Square** (June 2018)

"Helen Charlston, though, was the star of the show... like the best of desserts, her voice is creamy with a hint of sharp fruitiness, and it was with her solo 'Agnus Dei' towards the end of the musical feast, that she wowed the audience."

- Barry Creasy, musicOMH

Bach Weihnachts-Oratorium, **St John's Smith Square Christmas Festival (December 2017)**

"Helen Charlston was an exceptional interpreter; the gentle smile with which she intoned 'Schlafe, mein Liebster, (Sleep, my beloved)' was especially moving."

- Mark Valencia, Classical Source

Telemann 250th Anniversary, Florilegium, Wigmore Hall (June 2017)

"The clear highlight of the concert was the Epiphany Cantata Ihr Völker hört, which found Helen Charlston on top form, her diction clarion clear, her ability to cope with Telemann's florid writing never in doubt."

- Colin Clarke, Seen and Heard International

"Mezzo-soprano Helen Charlston, despite being a last-minute substitute, used her glinting tone to demonstrate the remarkable expressiveness of Telemann's recitatives."

- John Allison, The Telegraph

Handel Jephtha (Storgè), Academy of Ancient Music, London Festival of Baroque Music (May 2017)

"Charlston's Storgè moved finely from the beautifully shaped expressiveness of her opening aria, through great strength of feeling in 'Scenes of horror' to her vibrant reaction to the events of Act Two. Throughout Charlston showed an ability to combined vividness of expression with musicality, using her dark-hued voice to great effect."

- Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill

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Bach B minor Mass, **St John's Smith Square Christmas Festival** (December 2016)

"Though she had the lightest challenge, the Mezzo-Soprano Helen Charlston stood out on account of her warmly distinctive tone."  
- John Allison, The Telegraph

Bach St Matthew Passion, Amici Voices (March 2015)

"Mezzo soprano Helen Charlston deserves special mention. Her solos... displayed those qualities of her voice which have helped firmly establish Charlston on the professional scene."  
- Ingrid Pearson, Early Music Review

Esenvalds Northern Lights & other choral works, Trinity College Choir Cambridge, CDA68083 (February 2015)

"Trinity have a rather special mezzo, Helen Charlston, and her lovely singing tips the balance for me."  
- John Quinn, Music Web International