

Phillip Rhodes

Selected Reviews

Tosca, Scarpia, Oxford Opera (March 2025)

"Phillip Rhodes sang with visceral intensity and authoritative command of the music as the villainous Scarpia."
Emily Arlidge, Opera Magazine

Fidelio, Don Fernando, Royal Opera House (October 2024)

"Phillip Rhodes as the clear-sighted Minister and Jochen Schmeckenbecher as the cruel governor, Pizarro, all give characterful performances."
Claudia Pritchard, Culture Whisper

La Traviata, Germont, Scottish Opera (May 2024)

"Phillip Rhodes brings gravitas to the role of Alfredo's bourgeois father" **Simon Thompson, The Times**

"Phillip Rhodes was the dignified Germont, a refreshing change from the brusque, censorious caricature that is too often made of this role: he fully deserved his Act 2 cabaletta."
Andrew Clark, Opera Magazine

"Among the superb supporting cast, baritone Phillip Rhodes shines as Alfredo's father, the wretched blackmailer Giorgio Germont. The New Zealander is every inch the symbol of a French bourgeois morality that, while seemingly upright, is degraded and duplicitous."
Mark Brown, The National (Scotland)

"The cast of principals is excellent... Philip Rhodes, another returnee from recent ScotOp successes, contributes a very nuanced Germont, in his shifts between ramrod correctness and emotional honesty during Act 2."
Keith Bruce, The Herald Scotland

"Phillip Rhodes sang a fine Germont, his grey-edged baritone perfect for his steely soft power approach."
David Smythe, Bachtrack****

"Phillip Rhodes impresses as Giorgio Germont, perfectly portraying the characters emotional arc"
Lauren Humphreys, The Reviews Hub*****

La Traviata, Germont, Opera Australia (January 2024)

"As Germont senior, there was an early middle-age authority about Phillip Rhodes' voice that made him perfect casting for the role of a 40-something father, and his delivery of the Act two air, "Di Provenza al mar," was one of the production's purely musical highlights.

....as Violetta had started coughing again, Germont had dropped to his knee to persuade her she's still young and has time to find another love. Rhodes was particularly affecting"
Gordon Williams, OperaWire

"Phillip Rhodes impressed with his solid technique as Giorgio Germont" **Zoltán Szabó, Bachtrack*******

"Phillip Rhodes is impressive as the patriarch Giorgio" **Irina Dunn, CityHub**

"As Alfredo's father Giorgio, the humanity Phillip Rhodes brings to his attitude to Violetta is unusual and makes his demands of her more painful – because he realises what he's asking."
Diana Simmonds, Stage Noise***1/2**

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Un ballo in Maschera, *Count Anckarström*, Chelsea Opera Group (October 2023)

"As the (rightly) jealous husband of the king's love Amelia, Anckarström, imposing New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes ... in the becalmed sequence of his big Act 3 aria, "Eri tu", pulled out all the goods to moving effect."

David Nice, *The Arts Desk*

"The lovely timbre of Phillip Rhodes's capacious baritone paradoxically conveyed every drop of Anckarström's bitter jealousy, his voice swelling generously, the phrases sailing with Italianate elegance."

Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

Carmen, *Escamillo*, Scottish Opera (May 2023)

"Phillip Rhodes is an arresting Escamillo, with vocal bravado befitting a toreador"

David Lee, *The Guardian*

"Phillip Rhodes has the necessary arrogance as Escamillo to make the Toreador Song ring true."

Thom Dibdin, *The Stage*****

"Phillip Rhodes was an impressive Escamillo."

David Smythe, *Bachtrack*****

Lucia di Lammermoor, *Enrico*, Wellington Opera (March 2023)

"Philip Rhodes, so good as the overbearing Giorgio Germont in last year's La Traviata, has a similar role here as Lucia's brother Enrico, who contrives her fateful marriage to Arturo Bucklaw. And he delivers a masterful performance that, as his character's fortunes waver, modulates from easy, mocking command to profound desperation. Rhodes's voice, as ever, is rich and arresting. As in that La Traviata, Rhodes's connection with fellow lead Emma Pearson is exceptionally fine."

Max Rashbrooke, *stuff.co.nz*

Macbeth, *title role*, New Zealand Opera (September 2022)

"Phillip Rhodes has the personality and dramatic chops to make Macbeth spring to life in a bare audition room. Tonight, he played the anti-hero as a caged tiger, pacing his palace, charting his crumbling decline in magnificent song."

William Dart, *New Zealand Herald*

"In the title role, the formidable Phillip Rhodes hits the notes and inveigles us with his honey-gone-grainy vocal texture and sensuality. Many may remember his suave performance as Scarpia, the villainous police chief in the NZO production of Tosca. His role as Judge Turpin in Sweeney Todd also showed his ability to straddle hypnotically the line between sleaze and power. Macbeth needs all this in the Verdi opera; a flawed power-hungry man of demons and destructive machismo, and Rhodes delivers this vocally."

Michael Hooper, *The Dominion Post*

"His brooding, troubled presence permeates everything and his eventual unravelling demonstrates a quality to his characterisation that only adds to its depth."

Malcolm Calder, *New Zealand Arts Review*

"As Macbeth, Phillip Rhodes is in fine voice and even better acting form, his tormented madness coming into ever-sharper focus as things begin to fall apart."

Max Rashbrooke, *Stuff NZ*

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"Rhodes reveals his haunted and uncertain character through singing of wonderfully varied colours... Rhodes portrays an ambitious but conflicted character, complex, ambiguous, and ultimately weaker than his witch of a wife... he expresses Macbeth's unhinged state with great singing and acting."

Elizabeth Kerr, *Five Lines NZ*

"Philip Rhode's rendition of MacBeth was captivating and the switch from power hunger through despair, doubt and finally demise was a masterpiece to watch."

Alexis Brook, *Ambient Light*

"Phillip Rhodes is the perfect embodiment of Macbeth with his bearded good looks and commanding stage presence."

Andrew Whiteside, *andrewwhiteside.com*

Escamillo, *Carmen*, Opera North (October 2021)

"King of the entertainers is Phillip Rhodes's Elvis-like Escamillo, arriving on a bucking bronco to sing the Toreador Song with swagger."

Rebecca Franks, *The Times* ****

"Phillip Rhodes is bold as brass as Escamillo."

George Hall, *The Stage* ****

"Phillip Rhodes is an ostentatiously macho Toreador [...] splendid at the top — Escamillo is the trickiest role in the opera..."

Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times*

"...it's solidly cast: last-minute stand-in Erin Caves brings an incisive tenor to Don José, Phillip Rhodes is the testosterone-driven Escamillo — either a rodeo rider or a country and western singer, perhaps both — and Camila Titinger's soft-toned Micaëla has power where it counts."

Erica Jeal, *The Guardian* ****

"Of the four principals only Phillip Rhodes' Escamillo — rising above having to do the Toreador's Song as Elvis — consistently satisfies with his smooth singing and a swagger that never goes too far..."

Ron Simpson, *The Reviews Hub*

"Phillip Rhodes's powerful Escamillo..."

Geoffrey Mogridge, *Ilkley Gazette*

Ford, *Falstaff*, Scottish Opera (July 2021)

"Phillip Rhodes impresses as the energetically suspicious husband Ford and his deceptive alter-ego, Mr Brook."

Mark Brown, *The Telegraph*

"Phillip Rhodes sings Ford with unusual lyricism and warmth, almost enough to make this rotter sympathetic."

Simon Thompson, *The Times* ****

"Phillip Rhodes [was] an outraged Ford, delightfully scheming as Mr Brook"

David Smythe, *Bachtrack* ****

"Phillip Rhodes, as the outraged husband Ford and his disguised alter-ego Mr Brook, captures, in song and gesture, the power and energetic humour of his character's misguided suspicion."

Mark Brown, *The National*

"Phillip Rhodes (Ford), Elgan Llŷr Thomas (Fenton), Aled Hall (Dr Caius) and Jamie MacDougall (Bardolph) all played their part in this happy mosaic."

Andrew Clark, *Opera Magazine*

Don Pizarro, *Fidelio*, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra (May 2021)

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"The rest of the cast acquitted themselves well. The best of them was Phillip Rhodes as the malevolent Pizarro, with a beautiful round baritone that he used to sail through the extremes of his vengeance aria without strain, yet still giving the character's baleful personality its due."

Simon Holden, *Bachtrack*

Father, *Hansel and Gretel*, Scottish Opera (February 2021)

"[Nadine Benjamin] is matched with a beautifully sung father in Phillip Rhodes. Both here make their company debuts, and I hope we see them both again soon"

Simon Thompson, *Bachtrack*

"The singing is top class too, with company debuts for Phillip Rhodes, who brings vocal power and real charm to The Father"

Keith Bruce, *VoxCarnyx*

"Phillip Rhodes's (beautifully sung) Father"

Neil Fisher, *The Times*

"The baritone Phillip Rhodes's Father encapsulates the humour of David Pountney's English translation of the libretto"

Mark Brown, *The Telegraph*

Figaro, *The Marriage of Figaro*, Opera North (February 2020)

"The New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes relaxed into the title role immediately, despite taking it on for the first time. It fitted him like a glove. His Figaro retained unclouded optimism in the face of every setback, helped by warm, clear tone and eyebrows that crinkled with mirth at every excuse."

Martin Dreyer, *Opera Magazine*

"Rhodes's considerable acting skills and dark voice were just right for the part." **Richard Wilcocks, *Bachtrack* *******

"Performances by the main cast are faultless. Phillip Rhodes gives a muscular performance as Figaro."

Yakub Querishi, *Manchester Evening News*

"Phillip Rhodes was an outstanding Figaro: he has an impressive roster of roles to his name, and his flexible, finely coloured baritone blended beautifully with Fflur Wyn's mercurial Susanne. Much thought had been given to their duets ... their vocal intertwining was sublime."

Melanie Eskenazi, *MusicOMH* *****

"This cast is led by Rhodes and Wyn who have put on an excellent performance." **Dawn Smallwood, *The Reviews Hub***

Escamillo, *Carmen*, Welsh National Opera (September 2019)

"...Phillip Rhodes's Escamillo balanced bravado with charm."

Rian Evans, *Opera Magazine*

Speaker, *The Magic Flute*, Welsh National Opera (March 2019)

"I was impressed by Philip Rhodes' Speaker"

Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

"The two priests (...Phillip Rhodes) combine their sober songs with the gravity required by Sarastro's temple..."

Mark Everist, *Olyrix*

Baron Scarpia, *Tosca*, Nederlandse Reisopera (October 2018)

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"Phillip Rhodes, master of the wickedly raised eyebrow, lets his baritone smolder with subtly mixed nasal timbres."

Joep Christenhus, *nrc.nl*

"Phillip Rhodes did a very good job of Baron Scarpia, every inch a villain. Rhodes has a beautiful, dark voice with which he painted a perfect picture of the evil swindler with the character of a rotten medlar. His 'Va, Tosca' was lugubriously ominous."

Olivier Keegel, *Opera Gazet*

"...above all Phillip Rhodes (Scarpia) who shows ultimate abuse of power. Beautifully sung, very convincingly acted and with great attention to detail perfectly directed."

Henri Drost, *Theaterkrant*

"Phillip Rhodes is the ideal Scarpia..."

Thea Derks

Le Cid, Dorset Opera (July 2018)

"Paul Gay and Phillip Rhodes do sterling work as baritonal dignitaries..."

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*

Jud Fry, *Oklahoma!* Grange Park Opera (June 2018)

"...the casting of operatic baritone Phillip Rhodes gives Jud a weight and sympathy..."

George Hall, *The Stage*

"The other vocal star is Phillip Rhodes (Jud Fry), also the only operatic member of the cast. His rich, sonorous baritone almost makes up for the fact that Jud's song is one of the weakest musical numbers."

Louise Lewis, *British Theatre Guide*

"Rhodes, meanwhile, has an eerie ability to draw silence in around him. He's vulnerable as much as menacing, and his Jud could be the bullied kid brother of *Carousel*'s Billy Bigelow."

Richard Bratby, *The Spectator*

"Rhodes plays Jud with subtle eeriness, even managing to garner a touch of sympathy from the audience before his particularly sinister characteristics come to light. His powerful baritone mirrors the fearful dominance he has over Laurey."

Fiona Scott, *Broadway World*

Anckarström, *Un ballo in maschera*, Opera North (February 2018)

"Phillip Rhodes provides a vigorous, full-blooded Anckarström, giving credibility to his sudden change of heart towards the monarch he has loyally served."

George Hall, *Financial Times*

"Phillip Rhodes delivered gallons of warmth...his sound nicely focused."

Martin Dreyer, *Opera Magazine*

"The singing and acting, however, were of a high standard. The three principle roles were all well cast. The New Zealand Baritone, Phillip Rhodes, made a particularly strong impression as the angry Anckarstrom; and the confrontation with Amelia in the opening scene of Act III was, perhaps, vocally and emotionally the highpoint of the opera."

Antony Arblaster, *Opera Now*

Pagliacci & Cavalleria Rusticana, Opera North (September - November 2017)

"New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes was really impressive as her pianist lover Silvio, singing with a rich tenderness. [...]"

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Baritone Phillip Rhodes, an outstanding Alfio, conveyed an appropriate harshness as the equivalent of a small-time Mafioso, and had plenty of stage business around the vehicle. His scene during the Intermezzo was particularly moving. He smashed a chair, then wept after hearing about his wife Lola's infidelity, ending up sitting in the driver's seat."

Richard Wilcocks, *Bachtrack*

"Phillip Rhodes brought a warm baritone to Alfio..."

Martin Dreyer, *Opera Magazine*

"Phillip Rhodes is a strong-voiced Silvio"

Hugh Canning, *The Times*

"Richard Burkhard, Elin Pritchard and Philip Rhodes are both vocally and dramatically convincing as Tonio, Nedda and Silvio"

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*

"Phillip Rhodes refrains from any digs at power-crazed maestri in his acting – if anything, he's the straight guy here, just plain lustful – and balances his colleagues in vocal power."

Robert Beale, *The Arts Desk*

"Silvio (Phillip Rhodes) has become the company's conductor, drilling the chorus in their numbers and accompanying Elin Pritchard's Nedda as she tries out Stridono Lassù with a score."

Tim Ashley, *The Guardian*

"Philip Rhodes's Silvio is an ardent adulterer, oblivious to crossing any social boundaries"

Martin Dreyer, *York Press*

Escamillo, *Carmen*, The Grange Festival (June 2017)

"Baritone Phillip Rhodes as Escamillo impressed because he not only sang with decent French but actually sang with elements of French style giving the music a slight nasal twang which was perfect. In this relatively small theatre, he was able to demonstrate his nicely fluid top, and decent low notes in the Toreadors song. For all the fame of the music, this is a role which can easily fall flat in the theatre, and Rhodes ensured that it didn't."

Robert Hugill, *Planet Hugill*

"But casting (and this is predominantly a young troupe) requires significant roles to be taken by singers with stage presence. A suave Phillip Rhodes as Escamillo has this in spades and there is no doubting the generosity of his voice and his 'Toreador' number filled the stage; rich tones and smouldering looks form a perfect recipe."

David Truslove, *Classical Source*

"...Phillip Rhodes as Escamillo delivers 'Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre' very effectively."

Sam Smith, *Music OMH*

"New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes' Escamillo combines a macho image with inner emotional sensitivity."

George Hall, *The Stage*

Mizgir, *The Snow Maiden*, Opera North (January 2017)

"The eventual object of her emotions, Mizgir, is sung by Phillip Rhodes. He portrays his agony of love for the Snow Maiden with superb longing. Mizgir is the one true tragedy in the story, and Rhodes' anguish shines through in his superb baritone."

Sandra Callard, *OnMagazine*

"Her final scene with new love Mizgir (played by the richly voiced New Zealand Baritone Philip Rhodes) was moving and thoughtfully choreographed. It's a shame that Miskelly and Rhodes didn't have more singing to do as there were flashes of real quality in their performances – we can only blame Rimsky-Korsakov for that."

Richard Trinder, *The Yorkshire Times*

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Judge Turpin, *Sweeney Todd*, New Zealand Opera (October 2016)

"Phillip Rhodes is commanding as Judge Turpin, riding that fine balance between the civility and the barbarity of the character, showing us just how thin the facade is between the gentleman and the monster within."

Sam Jury, *Broadway World*

"Phillip Rhodes as a saturnine Judge Turpin added a nicely tuned depravity to the whole messy business..."

Christopher Moore, *The Press*

"Phillip Rhodes' rich baritone portrayed a strong Judge Turpin, but one where the inner corruption and weakness were visible."

Douglas Elliot, *The Opera Critic*

Germont, *La Traviata*, New Zealand Opera (July 2016)

"Phillip Rhodes brings his considerable power and gravitas to the role of Germont, arguably the only villain of the piece. With accuracy and purpose he commands the stage..."

Michael Hooper, *The Opera Critic*

"The other lead singers, notably Phillip Rhodes as the manipulative Giorgio Germont and Rachelle Pike as a feisty Flora, added their own lustre to a production which ultimately lacks absolutely nothing from go to woaah."

Christopher Moore, *Stuff*

Roucher, *Andrea Chénier*, Opera North (March 2016)

"In a large cast, there were notable contributions from Phillip Rhodes as Chénier's friend Roucher."

Anthony Arblaster, *Opera Now*

"Phillip Rhodes is a sonorous Roucher."

Tom Sutcliffe, *Opernwelt*

Scarpia, *Tosca*, New Zealand Opera (September 2015)

"As Scarpia, Phillip Rhodes has just the right power and charisma to catch the character's unredeemed villainy. Far from the wiggled and corpulent old lecher you might have had, decades ago, in a period production, the New Zealand baritone is lean and sexy, a Mafioso wolf prowling for prey in Maunder's post-Mussolini Italy. Rhodes' voice soars above the strong-voiced chorus in Act I's *Te Deum*, and yet he can be snake-like and subtle, laying out his personal credo of evil."

William Dart, *NZ Herald*

"As it turned out the most intriguing performance on stage was that of Rhodes as Scarpia. His youthful looks were far removed from the sleazy, brutish character that we often see, presenting rather a virile, masculine villain that in a different situation might have had little difficulty in seducing Tosca. (...) His virile baritone voice was sumptuous in texture, riding the orchestral and choral waves in the '*Te Deum*' at the end of Act 1, matching Tosca's outbursts in Act 2 note for note, and dominating every scene he was in as any good Scarpia should."

Michael Sinclair, *The Opera Critic*

"It would have been easy for Rhodes' Scarpia to be overshadowed by all this Wagnerian-scale singing from the romantic leads but he more than held his own through a combination of rich baritone vocalism and a sense of barely restrained violence. His rather elegant stage deportment matches well with his suavity of tone, making Scarpia legitimately attractive in his dealings with Tosca. This elegance makes his sudden ferocious outbursts of anger, both vocal and physical, all the more shocking – a much more interesting portrayal than your usual venal tyrant. His voice also has enough richness to make himself the centre of the busy *Te Deum* scene, even with the hefty dose of incense."

Simon Holden, *Bachtrack*

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"Rhodes, who has achieved recognition on the international opera stage, is brilliant in the part of the fanatically evil Scarpia, delivering the part with aplomb, in the nastiest possible way."

Marianne Kelly, *Time Live*

"Phillip Rhodes's performance as Baron Scarpia is excellent, brimming with malice and a thug-like authoritative control. He has a wonderful voice and was an excellent casting choice, able to stand alongside the powerful O'Neill. His portrayal perfectly captures that dark quality of corrupted people in power at the top, who can outwardly keep a calm and almost civilised manner, whilst simultaneously being the most ruthless and inhumane monsters imaginable."

Sam Jury, *Broadway World*

"Phillip Rhodes' Baron Scarpia is vocally menacing, particularly in the Te Deum." **Takeshi Ito, *Stuff***

"The romantic, freethinking artist Cavaradossi (Simon O'Neill) and the sleazy, greasy Scarpia (Philip Rhodes) were convincing in their tragic ideals, with the latter's dark looks perfect for his mafia-infused role."

Antonina Elliott, *National Business Review*

"Philip Rhodes, as the dark voiced villain Baron Scarpia, is right there with him vocally. The colours and power that he produces, his characterisation and concentration shows a fine operatic performer on the way up."

Penny Dodd, *Theatre Review*

"The villainous Baron Scarpia, played by Phillip Rhodes, embodies the manipulation and strength of this evil man who looks so suave he could've stepped out of *Goodfellas* or *The Godfather*. He's a wonderful performer whose voice adds the right level of perilous gravitas the story needs."

Ingrid Grenar, *Keeping up with New Zealand*

"As in any tragedy, love must be met with a destructive force. New Zealand's own Phillip Rhodes takes on the dastardly Baron Scarpia, enforcer of the law with an iron fist and his band of lackeys. Rhodes relishes in the performance, giving life to the conniving Scarpia as he entertainingly plans to ignite Tosca's jealousy and tear the lovers apart. Supported by the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, Rhodes is absolutely one to watch."

Emma Keesing, *Concrete Playground*

"As the Baron Scarpia, Rhodes, while maybe more elegant than evil, nevertheless has a rich and full baritone voice that gives the character great authority."

Ewen Coleman, *The Dominion Post*

"While Phillip Rhodes, another New Zealander making his mark on the international scene, injected his portrayal of Scarpia with a wonderful pervading menace."

Manawatu Standard

"As an elegantly dressed Scarpia, Rhodes' rich baritone voice has the menace of a Mafia Don determined to have Tosca. His is a cold passion, which conveys he will have his way and that words are only words."

Mary Bryan, *Wanganui Chronicle*

Judge Turpin, *Sweeney Todd*, Victorian Opera (July 2015)

"Phillip Rhodes gave Judge Turpin undeviating polish."

Paul Selar, *Herald Sun*