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# Ruby Hughes

## Selected Reviews

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### CD: AMIDST THE SHADES

Released February 2026 (BIS Records)

Hughes's voice retains a natural quality, for all its refinement, which has been skilfully captured – the recording is close enough for her to be able to be soft and confiding, but there's still a sense of space around the sound. She's more vocally demonstrative than some, colouring each word individually: when in Dowland's *Flow, My Tears* she sings of "fear, and grief, and pain", we're left in no doubt that these are three different but equally terrible emotions. And yet she, Nordberg and Brinkmann hold all this in balance, maintaining a persuasive sense of line and focus so that the expressivity registers not as indulgence but as communication.

- Erica Jeal, *The Guardian*

Whether Hughes is singing Dowland, Deborah Pritchard or Errollyn Wallen, her vocal colourings and phrasings are extraordinarily varied and delicate. Decorative frills in the early items are never overdone. Untouched by any bothersome vibrato, she's in firm control of every register and dynamic, and is particularly affecting singing pianissimo and beyond, as if expressing her private thoughts.

- Geoff Brown, *The Times*

Hughes's impossibly pure soprano so tastefully illuminated by the lute and viol, every note here floats not in aspic but in aether

- Gramophone

### Recital with Errollyn Wallen

Wigmore Hall / October 2025

"Hughes can turn her voice from tender to raw, revealing different colours like a glass held to the light"

- Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer*

"As sung by Hughes, often with the uninhibited freedom of a cabaret chanteuse"

- Richard Morrison, *The Times*

### CD: END OF MY DAYS

With Manchester Collective, released January 2024 (BIS Records)

"Music of quiet stillness, often nodding to folk or spiritual traditions, dominates early on, with Hughes's voice closely captured "

- Erica Jeal, *The Guardian*

"I think this is a mesmerising recital...Ruby Hughes combines classical sophistication with what feels sometimes like a folk singers simplicity and directness...I love the way she works with the words. And in some beautifully affective arrangements...I will be returning to this disc for sheer pleasure and contemplation."

- Andrew McGregor, *BBC Radio 3's Record Review*

"Imaginative, sensitive programming has been a constant feature of Ruby Hughes's collaborations; and this latest with the perennially adventurous Manchester Collective is no exception. ... A disc to concentrate the mind and enfold the soul."

*BBC Music Magazine*

'we hear Hughes' vocal prowess in terms of her clarity, diction, and expressiveness. The added haunting nostalgia had me hanging onto every word of John Clare's beautiful text.'

Azusa Ueno, *The Classical Review*

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‘Further vocal magic arrives in the shape of the soprano Ruby Hughes’s typically thoughtful recital with four gorgeously expressive string players from Manchester Collective, recorded two years ago when lockdown challenges weighed more heavily upon us than they do now. Even so, time has done nothing to dim the glory of Hughes’s clean and intensely expressive singing, or the manifold pleasures of a wide-ranging collection that might deal in part with loss and death but resonates most of all with the joy of loving and living.

The composers range from Debussy and Mahler to modern-day Brits, interspersed with Dowland laments, the vitamin C jolt of Caroline Shaw’s “Valencia”, and a Shetland folk song from the mists of time. Nothing appears out of place, everything is deeply felt and I sat happily throughout, basking in beauty and wonder.’

**Geoff Brown, *The Times* ★★★★★**

### The Dawn of Time recital

#### Wigmore Hall with Joseph Middleton (January 2024)

“Even so, nothing could hide Hughes’s sensitive and shapely phrasing and her fluid progress from one register to another, firepower under firm control.”

**– Geoff Brown, *The Times***

### CD: ECHO (Watkins, Pritchard, Wallen, Britten, Bach)

#### with Huw Watkins, released November 2022 (BIS Records)

“Hughes’s pure tone and sensitivity shine out, her voice at times almost ethereal”

**– Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

“A typically striking recital from the soprano Ruby Hughes ... Hughes’s vibrato-light voice is extremely expressive even when her volume’s turned low.”

**– Geoff Brown, *The Times***

“The cycle as a whole is deeply personal obviously because of the chosen text but even more so due to Hughes’ storytelling capabilities: she possesses the rare ability to make listeners feel like they are the only ones in the room.”

**– Azusa Ueno, *The Classic Review***

“Admire how vocally responsive Hughes is in the Purcell, how fragile and precious she sounds in Errollyn Wallen’s ‘Peace on Earth’ and how much she can communicate with barely a whisper of sound. Marvelous.”

**– Jason Victor Serinus, *Stereophile***

“Hughes’s pure, clear but supremely expressive soprano is the ideal vehicle for this poignant recital exploring the themes of loss and mourning, which takes its title from a powerful new song-cycle by Watkins setting texts by Rossetti, Dickinson, Yeats, Larkin and Harsent with unflagging imagination and sympathy. The Purcell songs are beautifully done, as are Watkins’s performances of astutely-chosen movements from Bach’s solo keyboard works, and Errollyn Wallen’s radiant ‘Peace on Earth’ makes for a cathartic closer.”

**– Katherine Cooper, *Presto Music***

“Hughes latest program is smart, subtle and guaranteed to resonate. Hughes’s voice [...] is pure as starlight and contains whole worlds of emotion.”

**– Rebecca Franks, *Limelight Magazine***

Hughes floats above Watkins’s piano line with a poise that treads softly and enrapt [...] She’s an economical singer for whom ‘less is more’, instinctively husbanding her considerable resources so that emotional climaxes generate maximum impact [...] An exquisite release touched with poignant pleasures and depth-plumbing reflections that echo, re-echo, linger and endure.

**Paul Riley, *BBC Music Magazine* (5\* Record of the Month)**

“One of the voices that touches me the most... each of her projects is original and sensitive, while she herself could be taken right out of a renaissance tableau.”

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"Disque du Jour" Emilie Munera and Rodolphe Bruneau-Boulmier's show "En Pistes!" , *France Musique*

Perhaps the best moments – and there are a lot of them – are those when we as listeners can be just transported by the sheer vocal beauty and refreshing candour of Ruby Hughes's voice. Can Purcell's "Music for a While" have ever been sung with more ineffable lightness than here? I doubt it

**Sebastian Scotney, *The Arts Desk***

### **Manchester Collective: This Savage Parade UK tour, June 2022**

"The fourth, [song from *Out of Dawn's Mind* ] "Shadow", is the longest and musically their emotional peak ... the voice more melodically inflected, and passion, anguish and consolation each wonderfully expressed by the soloist: her pianissimo at the close – "amazed" – was something to die for."

"Ruby Hughes has the ability to live the emotions of what she sings, while using eloquent gesture and engaging your mind by her technical finesse and precision. Her party piece began the second half: Barbara Strozzi's song "Che si può fare" (artfully and quite romantically arranged for strings by Fred Thomas), which makes a thing of beauty out of expressions of utter misery. She delivered it with moving expertise – that's what artistry is." - Robert Beale, *The Arts Desk* \*\*\*\*

### **CD: Renewal (March, Shaw, Golijov, Mendelssohn) with United Strings of Europe (BIS label), (released January 2022)**

"Welsh soprano Ruby Hughes is firmly in her element in each [Golijov song], singing with becoming warmth and clarity of tone, as well as impeccable intonation and diction." - Jonathan Blumhofer, *The Arts Fuse*

"Osvaldo Golijov's Three Songs, are also heard here for the first time with string orchestra accompaniment. They are sung here by the wonderful soprano Ruby Hughes, an artist with an endless assortment of vocal colors and a flawlessly instrumental technique." - Rafael de Acha, *All About the Arts*

"...the Golijov songs with soprano Ruby Hughes are a fitting centrepiece." - Freya Parr, *BBC Music Magazine* \*\*\*\*

"The pairing of soprano Ruby Hughes with the string orchestra makes for music of remarkable poignancy and grandeur, and *Renewal* stands out all the more for including a performance so resonant. [...] Hughes' haunting vocal conveys tenderness and despair and with maximum control. No moment on the recording is more powerful than this one, which is also perhaps the album's most intimate. The tone of the concluding part is consistent with the others, and Hughes again delivers a vocal of unerring pitch and shape. [...] Hughes in the Golijov performance are remarkable." - Textura

"...Ruby Hughes is achingly expressive in three songs by Golijov." - Katherine Cooper, *presto music*

### **CD: MAHLER/IVES/GRIME Songs for New Life and Love with Joseph Middleton (BIS label), (released September 2021)**

"I can't recall a recent vocal album curated and performed with such care. Its starting point was a 2017 song cycle by Helen Grime powerfully charting the motherhood experience in words and music both poetic and blunt. This led Hughes and her nimble piano partner, Joseph Middleton, to songs by Mahler and Charles Ives (a most fruitful pairing), variously musing over love, new life and its corollary, death. The result is an album not designed for cherry-picking but for splendid absorption as a whole. [...] Hughes feels

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deeply every word she sings. [...] nothing obscures this glorious singer's radiant tone and sensitive phrasing or the strong sense of her beating heart." - **Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"Light-voiced but strong and flexible, Hughes – with Middleton a sympathetic partner throughout – brings out the variety of Grime's writing, from the mercurial rippling of Brew – "multiplying cells like pearls" – to the darting anxieties of Milk Fever and the grey pain of Council Offices. An imaginative recital, beautifully executed." - **Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

"The intense intimacy of this performance by Hughes and her excellent accompanist, Joseph Middleton, follows through into their Mahler. The two cycles here — Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen and Kindertotenlieder, picking up the theme of the deaths of children from Grime's final song — are sung with an inwardness that is both affecting and quite daring. Add in a clutch of Ives's songs, including his loveable version of "Songs My Mother Taught Me", and an imaginative recital programme is complete." -

**Financial Times ★★★★★**

"At first glance Charles Ives and Gustav Mahler make unusual bed fellows. But on this excellent CD from BIS they flank a song cycle by Helen Grime to form a programme focusing on timeless concerns of love and loss, pregnancy and parenthood. It's a serious and thought-provoking concoction entitled Songs for New Life and Love, to which Ruby Hughes and Joseph Middleton fashion utterly beguiling performances that will surely make for one of this year's most rewarding and repeatedly played recordings.

[Mahler] In the traversal from numbed isolation to tentative spiritual solace, Hughes joins a distinguished group of interpreters and holds her own with the best of them. Throughout, she is a comforting presence, pure toned in the emptiness of 'Nun will die Sohn' so hell aufgehn' and maternal in 'Nun seh' ich wohl warum so dunkle Flammen' where 'Augen' and 'Sterne' (eyes and stars) are imbued with such beauty, one might forget how heart-rending these verses are.

[Grime] At times angular, spare and hauntingly beautiful, the music's quiet complexities and expressive variety are negotiated by Hughes and Middleton in an involving account that will make this fine partnership a natural choice for more of Grime's songs.

[Ives] To these songs Hughes responds with extraordinary delicacy, memorably heart-easing in the poignancy of 'The Children's Hour' and the childlike simplicity of 'Songs my Mother taught me'. Spinning the finest silk thread, Hughes will move you to tears each time you hear these songs. And as a night cap, she adds Huw Watkins's classy arrangement of the Welsh lullaby 'Suo Gân'."

- **David Truslove, *Opera Today***

"And her [Ruby] artistry is even more compellingly conveyed with just piano: she and the excellent Joseph Middleton create a remarkable sound world of intense intimacy, captured by BIS in demonstration-quality sound."

"Their approach fully lets both poetry and music come across on their own terms, and while there have been more powerful, more gut-wrenching accounts of these songs, there aren't many so delicately touching or intelligent. The same approach pays dividends in the Ives selections, cleverly programmed around the Grime cycle, as well as in a wide-eyed performance of the Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen that glistens with a wonderful dewy freshness – from both soprano and pianist.

Huw Watkins's unobtrusive arrangement of the Welsh lullaby 'Suo Gân', meltingly performed, is an inspired choice to complete the programme. An outstanding recital." - **Hugo Shirley, *Gramophone***

## Manchester Collective "Breaking Bread" collaboration Live-stream, Nottingham (February 2021)

"[Hughes] was on irresistible form whether conveying the Sapphic languor of Debussy's Trois chansons de Bilitis or the metaphysical transcendence of Mahler's Urlicht. And how effective to have a singer delivering such a varied repertoire straight to camera without

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any sheet music.” - Richard Morrison, *The Times*

“[...] guest soloist Ruby Hughes made her own choices from a very wide range of soprano repertoire as a major factor in the compilation of the programme: she brings beautifully meditative and focused singing to these songs.”

- Robert Beale, *The Arts Desk*

“Soprano Ruby Hughes joined the players for songs chosen, seemingly, for the moment. John Dowland’s pieces mused on isolation – though the (uncredited) arrangements of his two laments “Flow, My Tears” and “Go Crystal Tears” created so much space around Hughes almost improvisatory solo line that loneliness was replaced by something more reassuring – while Ravel’s Kaddish provided a keening prayer of intercession.

But there was sensuality and hope too from the lazy eroticism of Debussy’s *Trois Chansons de Bilitis* (Hughes at her richest and most persuasive in “La chevelure”) and finally Mahler’s transcendent *Urlicht* – death reimagined as hope. This was an hour of music holding a whole world within it.” - Alexandra Coghlan, *iNews*

“[...] the lightness and clarity of Hughes’ soprano. “Go crystal tears, like to the morning show’rs/ And sweetly weep into thy lady’s breast,” she uttered, with almost tragic tenderness, the final syllable floating and fading, seeming to vanish, to slip out of time, and then gently re-emerge.

[...] Ravel’s Kaddish, from the *Deux Mélodies Hébraïques*, continued the lamentation and spiritual journey[...] Hughes’ soprano was unwaveringly warm and full, and the vocal phrases expanded with persuasive flexibility; she showed a tremendous and innate appreciation of the rhythms of the French text, and pushed forwards compellingly to the exultation of the final “Amen”, which releases the soul into the afterlife.

[...]The performance closed with spiritual transfiguration: ‘Urlicht’ from Mahler’s *Resurrection Symphony*. Hughes’ solemn song was nevertheless opulent and intense, the simple rising intervals aspiring hopefully, lifting us towards the celestial lights above.”

- Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

### **CD: RHIAN SAMUEL/BERG/MAHLER *Clytemnestra* BBCNOW with Jac Van Steen (BIS/Naxos), (released January 2020)**

“Ruby Hughes is increasingly proving to be a key singer of the early 21st century.”- Dr. Jürgen Schaarwächter, *Klassik.com* (5\*)

“Ruby Hughes rises to the challenge with bombproof technical strength and control, plenty of firepower where needed, and a thrilling instinct for capturing the persona of this fearsome anti-heroine. [...] .”

"They and Hughes also explore the rapturous soundworld of Mahler’s *Ruckert-Lieder* with mesmerising poise and finesse: I’ve never heard the opening line of ‘Ich atmet’ sung more beautifully.” - Malcolm Hayes, *BBC Music Magazine* (5\*)

“[...] British soprano Ruby Hughes, who gives vivid voice to a more controversial wronged woman in the Welsh composer Rhian Samuel’s *Clytemnestra*, a powerfully impressive piece unjustly neglected since its 1994 premiere. [...]

Time and again on this album — usefully filled out with Mahler and Berg, predecessors audibly close to Samuel’s heart — soloist and composer make *Clytemnestra*’s wrenching drama something tangible. When Hughes sings of fire, you feel the heat. At the word “weeping”, your heart breaks. Her eloquence is always unfussy and direct.” - *The Times* (5\*)

“[...] it’s Hughes’s performance that carries the whole enterprise: vivid, powerful and superbly committed, bringing a real complexity

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and vulnerability to the character. She's impressive in the couplings, too, using her lightish soprano intelligently in a sharply etched account of Mahler's Rückert Lieder (with an especially fine 'Um Mitternacht') and a focused, uncompromising account of Berg's Altenberg Lieder." - Hugo Shirley, *Gramophone Magazine*

"Alban Berg's settings of Peter Altenberg, atonal songs that draw directly on Gustav Mahler's orchestral songs, his Rückert Lieder. Intelligent companion pieces in this recital from soprano Ruby Hughes, and her vocal quality suits them so well, a refreshing clarity and immediacy that's like a splash of cold water from the mountain spring."

- Andrew McGregor, *BBC Radio 3 Record Review*

"[...] soprano Ruby Hughes, the BBCNOW and conductor Jac van Steen give new life to Samuel's powerful, seven-movement work for soprano and orchestra (here coupled with Mahler and Berg). [...] it explores – with rare insight, passionately expressed by Hughes – the motives that led Clytemnestra to murder her husband, Agamemnon."

- Fiona Maddocks, "Home Listening" picks, *The Guardian*

"Mahler's Rückert Lieder have been recorded many times over by great singers; what Hughes brings to her interpretation is a refreshing balance of expressivity, lightness, and clarity." - Azusa Ueno, *The Classic Review*

"If you don't know Ruby Hughes, then start with track 2 and Mahler's "Ich atmet' einen linden Duft!" and you will hear as pure and sweet a soprano sound as can be imagined, perfectly suited to this song.

[Berg:] Here too, Ruby Hughes sounds equally engaged with this much stranger world (of both words and notes), with many an expressionist nuance in her handling of these enigmatic texts. [...] the awkwardly angular opening vocal line presents no problems to this soprano. She seems able to cope with the tricky intervals and leaps across the passagio expertly. The odd line of sprechgesang sounds quite idiomatic here, almost as if Ruby Hughes specialises in the songs of the Second Viennese School.

[Samuel:] Ruby Hughes identifies with all this in her assumption of the tragic Queen's role, her anger, cunning and despair a tour-de-force of vocal acting, in a part which makes demands on range, agility and colour commensurate with those made by Berg. [...] In 2015, when Ruby Hughes discovered Clytemnestra it had not been performed since its première and we should be grateful she has championed the work with such commitment, for it is very well worth this revival."

- Roy Westbrook, *MusicWeb International*

"[Samuel:] ...Hughes's terrific account of the solo part. She's in complete command, technically and expressively, whether singing from the depths of the "Lament" or nimbly dancing through the unsettled "Defiance" and concluding "Dirge." [Berg/Mahler:] In both, Hughes – whose pure tone, even projection across all registers, and excellent diction recalls the exceptional Margaret Price in her prime – sounds glorious." - Jonathan Blumhofer, *The Arts Fuse*

### BERG Seven Early Songs

#### Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Pablo González (January 2020)

"Ruby Hughes sang them [Alban Berg's songs] beautifully and sensitively, at times declaiming, other times with full sound. (...) It was an organic performance, with elaborate playing from the orchestra and a lot of fine detail work. Hughes received well-deserved applause for her acute interpretation." - Arnfinn Bø-Rygg, *Aftenbladet*

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### **Tre Voci (Ruby Hughes, Natalie Clein & Julius Drake)** **Kings Place (November 2019)**

“...a fluid programme ranging from Schumann – his poignant late songs, affectingly sung by the superb Hughes – to a world premiere by Judith Weir.” - Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer*

### **HANDEL Brockes-Passion** **The Academy of Ancient Music with Richard Egarr (April 2019)**

“[...] here Ruby Hughes’ fresh, strong soprano and clarity of line conveyed the passionate faith of the Faithful Soul.”  
- Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

“Ruby Hughes [gave] a performance which powerfully identified with the character's reactions... her final contribution was a striking accompagnato where the music really did react to the drama of the words.” - Robert Hugill, *Planet Hugill*

“[Ruby Hughes] offered an extraordinary meditation of the Crown of Thorns, raising the emotional temperature...”  
- *Classical Source* (5\*)

“The pure voiced Ruby Hughes also makes her mark as A Faithful Soul, not least in the assuaging minuet aria ‘Was Wunder, dass der Sonnen Pracht’, warmly coloured by bassoons.” - Richard Wigmore, *Gramophone Magazine*

### **CD: HANDEL Brockes-Passion** **The Academy of Ancient Music with Richard Egarr (released April 2019)**

“As a Faithful Soul, Ruby Hughes’ soprano sails with angelic sweetness as if its purity embodies the love that leaps from Jesus’ blood as the soldiers thrash him.” - Claire Seymour, *Opera Today*

### **CD: MAHLER Symphony No.2 in C minor "Resurrection"** **Minnesota Orchestra with Osmo Vänskä, BIS Records (released January 2019)**

“The two singers, Sasha Cooke (mezzo) and Ruby Hughes (soprano), make a first class job of the challenging music they have to sing. [...] Ruby Hughes has an analogous moment when her voice emerges from the chorus having started as one of the mass. This is quite magical and in BIS' dynamic recording it is even more striking a piece of musical theatre. Both singers are experienced artists and this shows even in these brief parts.” - Dave Billinge, *MusicWeb International*

### **HANDEL Theodora (title role)** **Potsdamer Winteroper (November 2018)**

“The Welsh soprano Ruby Hughes in the role of Theodora convinced with almost heavenly colours.”  
- Mathias Richter, *Märkische Allgemeine* (Translated)

“The soprano Ruby Hughes in the title role is a stroke of good fortune all round. Agility and vocal colours in the lyrical passages

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complement each other wonderfully.” - Klaus Büstrin, *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* (Translated)

“Ruby Hughes expresses all the suffering of Theodora in her soft, often unbelievably soft tones. In addition, her characterisation is authentic and enthralling: until her death, Theodora still looks like a broken being, then she radiates the greatest presence as a redeemed angel.” - Jonas Zerweck, *Der Tagesspiegel* (Translated)

### **BACH B Minor Mass, London Handel Players (June 2018)**

“Ruby Hughes’ soprano has a glorious bell-like tone to it, and the semiquaver runs in ‘Laudamus te’ rolled out like peals of silvery laughter.” - Barry Creasy, *Music OMH*

### **CD: Handel’s Last Prima Donna | Giulia Frasi in London Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (released March 2018)**

“With her limpid purity of tone, immaculately even coloratura and graceful sense of style, Hughes is in many ways ideal for this repertoire. ... The gentle beauty of Hughes’s voice, deployed with unflinching taste, can hardly fail to give pleasure, the music – not least the Queen of Sheba’s valedictory ‘Will the sun forget to streak’ - often touches the sublime, while the non-Handel items will come as delightful discoveries to many.” - Richard Wigmore, *Gramophone Magazine*

“The Muses were highly generous with Ruby Hughes: the graceful voice, flexible and never forced, and the always elegant phrasing. [...] A sweet and clear voice giving all the restrained emotion required by these arias [...] A magnificent album where everything is about beautiful humility, subtlety and dialogue.” - *France Musique*

“A fascinating insight into the world of Giulia Frasi....this disc comes with the highest recommendation... If you haven’t come across Ruby Hughes you should quickly get to know her...” - *WDR Westdeutscher Rundfunk* | 5\* Interpretation; 5\* Repertoire

“Hughes’s honeyed tone is balm on the ears: there’s never a hint of shrillness and her impeccable diction means that you never have to refer to the texts. [...] Not just for baroque buffs: this is one of the most thrilling vocal recitals I’ve heard in ages.” - Graham Rickson, *Arts Desk*

“Hughes has always had a voice of crystalline beauty, but recently it has developed an extra velvety richness with no loss of purity. Crystal Streams (Susanna) suited her to a tee, while in Will the Sun Forget to Streak (Solomon), the Queen of Sheba’s rapt response to the glories of Jerusalem, guided tour, she explored a darker tonal quality. “

- Barry Millington, *Evening Standard*

“Perfect casting for Hughes, who possesses a pellucid soprano that caresses the gentler phrases of Handel and his contemporaries. The opening arias, from the oratorio Susanna, showcases her charms to perfection. A later number, from Ciampi’s Camilla, also gives Hughes the opportunity to showcase her technical facility in showier music [...]”

- Francis Muzzu, *Classical Music Magazine*

“Ruby Hughes’s vocalism fits Frasi’s song perfectly. Arias by Hayes, Ciampi and JC Smith – all recorded for the first time – are often simple in their design, but demand total control. The pure-toned Hughes achieves this with ease and fresh-faced candour. [...] Hughes sighs out her heart-break and subtly adjusts her colours to match those of the solo instrument playing with her [...] This disc is a treat [...]” - Berta Joncus, *BBC Music Magazine*

“Performances are excellent; the recording sumptuous – you can't wait to get to the next track.”

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- BBC Radio 3's Record Review with Andrew MacGregor & Simon Heighes

"A truly exceptional Soprano...her voice is not smooth or demure. It is clear, highly expressive with a marvellous timbre...this is an exhilarating record that is quickly addictive." - SWR Germany

"Hughes is in delightful form throughout this collection and there are many highlights with the Handel works shining out like beacons. [...] An enthralling blend of established baroque works and new discoveries makes this satisfyingly performed album from Ruby Hughes particularly desirable." - Michael Cookson, *MusicWeb International*

### Recital with Joseph Middleton Wigmore Hall (February 2018)

Her sweet, ringing tone was beautifully restrained at the opening and as the romantic drama unfolded pianist and singer communicated the narrative with expressive lightness of touch. [...] Middleton and Hughes thrilled with a layered, theatrical account, which also held a dreamlike quality. [...] Mahler's Kindertotenlieder took us further into the grief allied to parenthood. Hughes's voice now carried more weight while retaining an airy flexibility. In this way the almost overpowering emotional darkness of these Rückert settings was bearable and the bittersweet memories contained a purity reminiscent of the child's vision of heaven in Mahler's Fourth Symphony. [...] Hughes and Middleton conveyed every grain of feeling from 'Ca' the yowes' and finished with the limpid clarity of the love and loss of 'O Waly Waly'. Amanda-Jane Doran, *Classical Source*(5\*)

### CD: Heroines of Love and Loss with Mime Brinkmann, Jonas Nordberg, BIS Records (released February 2017)

"Soprano Ruby Hughes has just released an album of 17th-century songs by and about women, showing off her virtuosity and subtlety as a performer and unlocking the deeply personal, soulful heart of this rarely performed music. Hughes seems able to direct a winding, melisma-strewn phrase with total conviction and uncanny humanity. Her phrasing is full of delicious surprises: a little glissando, a whispering pianissimo, a diminuendo on an upward scale, a touch of breath to highlight the text's sensuality." - Andrew Mellor, *Opera Now*

"A Diapason d'or award? An contradictory accolade for a recital without sunshine or luxury, where dark trouble and subtlety reign. 'Udite amanti' shows Ruby Hughes capable of great heights even in the shadows, conjuring lugubrious melismas that never drown out the text...The youthfulness of the timbre within the tormented songs of love give this album a unique atmosphere and aura, even amongst the many laments recorded in the last decade... How we love to suffer with the music, and with them!" - Gaetan Naulleau, *Diapason d'Or Magazine* (translated)

"Hughes sings the famous lament from Purcell's Dido and Aeneas with a delicacy scarcely ever heard before, as if the desperate queen had already taken the poison or a dagger to her heart[...] Francesca Caccini was celebrated for the fine beauty of her voice in performances of her own music. Ruby Hughes is worthy successor to Caccini in her performance of this piece. It is quite simply meltingly beautiful." - Jurgen Otten, *Opernwelt* (translated)

"She has a warm, almost mellow voice, well suited to this enterprising selection of 17th-century songs [...] to all of them Ruby Hughes brings an exemplary understanding and stylishness." - Richard Lawrence, *Gramophone Magazine* (Editor's Choice)

"Hughes's rich soprano has deepened and has a middle range with body and penetration [...] 'Lasciatemi qui solo' by Francesca Caccini highlighted Hughes's purity of tone and absence of vibrato [...] the vocal effects including sobs and sighs, which Hughes was completely at one with." - Amanda-Jane Doran, *Classical Source*

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“Hughes manages to make this world so much her own. I love the flexibility of her voice, the chameleon quality. Even within this disc she goes from operatic extremes to an intimate chamber place very effectively.... she gets the operatic dimensions of the music beautifully. It’s so easy to overload emotions (this whole disc is very charged with anguish and abandonment) but she never overcooks it.... Dido’s lament is beautifully sung. Its a young portrayal of Dido and there’s an innocence here which you don’t normally get and which I found intensely moving. This isn’t a performance of grief, it’s really internalised.”

- Record Review on BBC Radio 3 with Andrew Macgregor and Alexandra Coghlan

“For all its apparent thematic interest, his CD is really a showcase for the vocal skills of Ruby Hughes, and these turn out to be considerable indeed. In these songs accompanied by lute and cello there is no place to hide, but Hughes’ impeccable technique and expressive imagination take us on a rewarding tour of this lovely repertoire. [...] she demonstrates a rich palette of vocal colours. These truly come into their own later in Hughes’ intense account of Dido’s Lament.”

- Dr James Ross, *Early Music Review* (5\*)

“The outstanding singer Ruby Hughes gives sensual luster to the whimpering, sobbing and sighing music by Francesca Caccini, Barbara Strozzi, Lucrezia Vizzana and Claudia Sessa. “

- Martin Nyström, *Dagens Nyheter* (5\*)

“We have here a very beautiful, coherent CD with a lot of delicate and truly moving singing by Ruby Hughes.”

- Remy Franck, *Pizzicato Magazine*

### **CD: Nocturnal Variations (debut recital disc) with Joseph Middleton, Champs Hill Records (April 2016)**

“Soprano Ruby Hughes moves effortlessly from Schubert’s *Nachtstucke* to Mahler’s *Urlicht* and then the sound worlds we’ve just heard (Berg *Warm die Luft* & Britten *Evening from This way to the tomb*), finding moments of heart-stopping beauty as she explores these *Nocturnal Variation* [...] I found this a captivating recital.” - Andrew McGregor, *Record Review - BBC R3*

“Well, there’s no question, first of all, that we have two major talents here. Ruby Hughes has an exceptionally flexible high soprano voice; she can move from an almost toneless *sotto voce* through to a rich, full sound in the twinkling of an eye. And that hints at her approach to these wonderful songs; she is a natural story-teller, and is always on the look-out for colour and drama [...] This disc is very special [...] something to relish, and a great achievement.”

- Gwyn Parry-Jones, *MusicWeb International* - RECORDING OF THE MONTH

“Her singing is exceptional for its consistency. Though her tone is light and delicate, it’s invariable true in pitch and capable of a surprising range of dynamic variety – a perfect instrument of its kind. Every word she sings comes through clearly.”

- George Hall, *BBC Music Magazine* (5\*)

### **CD: PURCELL Songs Realised by Britten Champs Hill Records (April 2016)**

“What riches and pleasures this two-disc set contains....and a superb set of young singers offers ideal freshness and variety of timbre and colour. Highlights include 'The Blessed Virgin’s Expostulation' and 'O Solitude' interpreted with exquisite chaste purity by

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# Ruby Hughes

## Selected Reviews

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soprano Ruby Hughes.” - Rupert Christiansen, *The Sunday Telegraph* (5\*)

“...the singers steer a convincing stylistic course, balancing the sometimes contradictory demands of the source material and the arrangement...the expressivity of Hughes and Rose's ‘No resistance is but vain’ is impressive and Middleton's playing is precisely coloured and characterised.” - Anna Picard *BBC Music Magazine* (4\*)

“As for the performance, this is just plain gorgeous singing. Hughes especially stands out with sublime and wondrously shaped phrasing of ‘Evening Hymn’ and ‘The Blessed Virgin’s Expostulation’.” - R. Moore, *American Record Guide*

### **RHIAN SAMUEL Clytemnestra**

#### **BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Tecwyn Evans (March 2016)**

“The second half was devoted to Samuels’ Clytemnestra, a rich, substantial piece from a composer plainly at ease with both her material and her own voice. Hughes sang beautifully; by turn, chilling and heartrending in short, poetic imagery and longer melismatic lines.” - Steph Power, *Wales Arts Review*

### **MAHLER Symphony No. 4**

#### **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Jesús López Cobos (January 2016)**

“The soprano soloist for the finale, Ruby Hughes, has the pure, youthful sound it was surely meant for...the gentle blend of voice and orchestra was near-perfect at the end.” - Robert Beale, *Manchester Evening News*

“Here, suddenly was a burst of sunlight, with thundering timpani and blazing brass heralding Ruby Hughes’ Himmlische Leben. Her singing was beautiful in timbre and impressive in characterization of the text...a fitting end to an excellent evening.”

- Rohan Shotton, *Bachtrack*

### **WATKINS Remember**

#### **BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Garry Walker (February 2016)**

“In Remember, the highly evocative cycle of four songs for soprano and orchestra – sung by Ruby Hughes and conceived for her – the second setting, Thomas Hardy’s poem Shut Out That Moon, Hughes’ expressivity together with Watkins’ authoritative writing for strings conveyed huge emotional intensity.” - Rian Evans, *The Guardian*

### **PURCELL The Fairy Queen**

#### **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Berliner Philharmonie, Rinaldo Alessandrini (January 2016)**

“Outstanding here was soprano Ruby Hughes, who shaped with moving intensity the great lamentation aria ‘O let me weep’.”

- Ursula Wiegand, *Neue Merkur Wien*

“Great praise is due to all the soloists [...] in particular, however to Ruby Hughes, who appears first as an attractive Titania in a long, bright red coat. Her beautiful, clear soprano voice radiates through the hall and almost moves the audience to tears in the 5th act as the role of the black-clothed, lamenting, weeping Laura. For me, this was the vocal climax of the performance.”

- Kulturradio vom RBB (*Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg*)

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# Ruby Hughes

## Selected Reviews

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“Next to that we experienced some extremely internal moments, which belonged entirely to the music. Songs such as the enchanting “If Love's a Sweet Passion, why does it torment?“, and the grandiose “O let me weep“, were sung with utmost expression by soprano soloist Ruby Hughes.” - *Der Tagesspiegel*

“Wonderful insights were to be had with Maestro Alessandrini who is one of the most inspiring interpreters of early music today. His soloists are of an equally high standard; Ruby Hughes and Lawrence Zazzo being part of the ensemble.”

- Peter Uelig, *Berliner Zeitung*

“The atmospheric impact was extremely touching, in particular when Ruby Hughes, personifying Night, pulled a white sheet over the chorus who snuggled up to each other, using torches, blinking like earthworms in the dark.”

- Jan Brachmann, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*