
Xavier Sabata

Selected Reviews

HANDEL Giulio Cesare (title role) Gran Teatre del Liceu (May 2025)

"The title role in Handel's Giulio Cesare was sung by Catalan countertenor Xavier Sabata, who gave one of his finest performances at the Liceu... Sabata did a superb job musically and as an actor, presenting a Cesare with dramatic flair...achieving great success especially in the most lyrical and emotional arias of the opera's main character."

- **Fernando Sans Riviere, *OperaActual***

"Caesar is sung by Barcelona's Xavier Sabata, who has the stature to impress... He maintains a beautiful singing line"

- **Jean-Marcel Humbert, *Forum Opera***

"Sabata, always a great artist, sensitive musician, and charismatic actor... portraying a complex, flesh-and-blood Cesare, always phrasing elegantly."

- **Antoni Colomer, *Platea Magazine***

"Xavier Sabata recreated a skillful Giulio Cesare"

- **Maria Sánchez, *Bachtrack***

MONTEVERDI I Grotteschi (Esperienza) La Monnaie (April 2025)

"Esperienza, sung by Xavier Sabata, embodies the housekeeper... imposing a voice of control in the face of the excesses of the other characters. The countertenor's lower tones, combined with a fully mastered head voice, succeeds in expressing this authority without ever losing its naturalness. A subtle humanity emerges in the high notes, carried with intensity and precision, giving the character a singular vocal density."

Xavier Sabata shines in the female role of Esperienza, governess and confidante. Protective but ambivalent, she navigates between loyalty to the family and personal interests. The wolf mother of the two servants, in the manner of the Roman she-wolf in Romulus and Remus, she embodies the anxieties and outbursts of empathy of a mother with a remarkable vocal depth. Sensitive and intense, this mother lives through her daughters with a breadth that will have conquered the public."

- **Soline Heurtebise, *Olyrix***

"The countertenor, Xavier Sabata, produced a larger-than-life interpretation, which had her whooping and screaming, mimicking and crying. There was plenty of comedy in his portrayal, but also sadness and quiet compassion. It was a fascinating and successful reading, a judgement that can also be applied to his vocal presentation. Recitatives were animated and grabbed the attention, while his arias were wonderfully crafted to bring out the full depth of their emotional content. In Act one of "Godo," he sings the lullaby "Adagiati, fanciulla" to comfort his daughter: the love and compassion he was able to inject into his voice was a delight; moreover, it stood in such stark contrast to her normal hysterics that the effect was breathtaking."

- **Alan Neilson, *OperaWire***

"Xavier Sabata's performance in the role of Esperienza, the nanny/governess, was also a great success. At times comforting, hilarious and provocative, the character occupies a large place in the plot, and the singer takes up the challenge with panache... His lullaby at the end of the first act of Godo was a peak of musical emotion."

- **Claude Jottrand, *Forum Opera***

"Esperianza, brilliantly played by an extraordinary Xavier Sabata."

- **Sébastien Foucart, *ConcertoNet***

"Finally, we must salute the exceptional comic and hilarious incarnation of Xavier Sabata as a plaintive and exasperated governess Esperienza, bringing, through all her vocal theatricality, her twirling stage acting, and her wide expressive range,

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both vocal and physical, within this comedy as dark as it is intellectual, a great burst of laughter and a comic illusion welcome by its very successful cross-dressing."

- **Benedict Hévry, *ResMusica***

HANDEL Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno (Disinganno) Goettingen Handel Festival (May 2024)

"Countertenor Xavier Sabata (Disinganno) ... proved to be a fine performer, especially in the aria "Più non cura"."

- **HNA Melsunger Allgemeine**

"Xavier Sabata as Truth (Disinganno, literally disillusionment) ... shone in the grandiose performance."

- **Karl Georg Berg, *Die Rheinpfalz***

STRADELLA St Giovanni Batista Perelada Easter Festival (March 2024)

"The countertenor from Avià once again demonstrated the caliber of his refined singing, with consistently polished phrasing and the profound significance of the sung word, in a lyrically theatrical style that is his trademark. The velvety tone of his timbre, the humanity of his singing, and that extra touch of acting, even in a concert version, made his portrayal of the apostle yet another testament to the artistic peak Xavier Sabata is currently experiencing."

- **Jordi Maddaleno, *Platea Magazine***

SCHOENBERG Pierrot Lunaire (title role) Teatro Real / Teatro de la Abadía (February 2024)

"Sabata's phrasing and exquisite intonation intensify his performances, with perfect modulations, effortless transitions to higher notes, and extraordinary homogeneity in his voice. This allows him to naturally shift from a whisper to a shout, showcasing the full range and expressiveness of his instrument."

- **José María Marco, *Opera Actual***

"Xavier Sabata, a splendid performer, who in addition to being an accomplished actor is a competent singer who has developed a notable career as a countertenor and on this occasion has taken on the stage direction of this Pierrot lunaire, a fable in which Sabata tries to unify the myths of Narcissus and Pierrot."

- **Xoan M. Career, *Mundoclasico.com***

SCHUBERT Winterreise La Monnaie (February 2024)

"Xavier Sabata's theatrical performance, like a one-man show, holds the stage with a purely romantic vocal intensity: alone on stage like Schubert's wanderer, akin to a storyteller ... his countertenor voice emerges, rich and celestial, with eloquence and elevation. (...) With a standing ovation by the audience, Sabata masterfully plays with this dialogue of registers, between the low and high notes (...)." - **Soline Heurtebise, *Oryx.com***

MONTEVERDI L'Incoronazione di Poppea (Ottone) Gran Teatre del Liceu (July 2023)

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"The countertenor Xavier Sabata was also at an extraordinary level, delivering a textbook Ottone thanks to the breadth of his vocal resources, his absolute command of the style, and his immense acting talent." - **Javier Perez Senz, *Scherzo***

"Fantastic Xavier Sabata as Ottone, perhaps in the best performance he is remembered for at the Liceu, due to the exquisiteness of his singing and the depth of the character." - **Fernando Sans Rivière, *Opera Actual***

GARCÍA-TOMÁS Alexina B (Doctor, Abbott, Monster, Judge) Gran Teatre del Liceu (March 2023)

"Magnificent Xavier Sabata, who beyond the Baroque has become a true champion of contemporary opera in our country, skillfully delineated his multiple characters: squalor, condescension... the entire universe of the men who decided the fate of Alexina." - **Gonzalo Lahoz, *Platea Magazine***

"Sabata, for his part, infused malignancy into all of his characters, variations of the same, and demonstrated technical proficiency in handling the musical complexity presented by García-Tomás's score." - **Xavier Borja Bujar, *Coladario***

SCARLATTI Il Giardino d'Amore (Venus) Globe Theatre Neuss (August 2022)

"Star Countertenor Xavier Sabata has a buttery alto tone as Venus" - **Rheinische Post, Regine Müller**

"As Venus, Sabata has a very soft countertenor, with great flexibility in the coloratura... Sabata dramatically underlines the sublime character of the goddess of love" - **OMM, Thomas Molke**

PURCELL The Fairy Queen Peralada Festival (July 2022)

"Continuity was provided by the comedian and countertenor, Xavier Sabata."

"Sabata is very funny – and he is also a fine singer, more than capable of giving Purcell due attention."
- **Simon Mundy, *Opera Now***

HANDEL Orlando (title role) Theater Oper Halle (May 2022)

"Exactly like that, and fully convincing: Orlando, portrayed by the Spanish countertenor Xavier Sabata, initially a noble gentleman, becomes increasingly malevolent due to his love obsession and gradually loses his mind. Xavier Sabata masters this highly demanding role, with its 'mad scene' once sung by the famous castrato Francesco Bernardi, also known as Senesino, with beautiful tone and brilliance." - **Ursula Wiegand, *Onlinemerker***

"Irresistible magic: Xavier Sabata as Orlando" - **Jürgen Gahre, *Opera Now***

HANDEL Amadigi (title role) Madrid Auditorio Nacional with Vespres d'Arnadi (March 2022)

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"One of Sabata's great virtues is his stage presence, given his acting training as well as the singer, which makes his roles always very plausible, even in concert versions, as was the case. In addition, he is a singer to savor the text, which in his vocality always reaches very high levels of diction and expression." – **Mario Guada, CodaLario**

"Sabata as Amadigi was interesting vocally and highly noteworthy theatrically, through his stage gestures, always successful. Her voice with stupendous diction and easy coloratura stood out in several of her arias, such as in the beautiful singing line shown in 'Notte, amica dei ripos' or the coloratura in the bravura aria 'Non sa temere questo mio petto'."

– **Carlos Orejas, Opera World**

"The cast was not only led, but starred almost entirely by Xavier Sabata, who played one of the most extensive Handelian roles. His Amadigi shone in the most delicate moments...Sabata masterfully moves through the various affects with an involvement and expressiveness that is out of the ordinary." – **Javier Sarria Pueyo, Scherzo**

"Sabata, in the leading role, exhibited his undeniable charisma and that fascination he feels for tragic and tortured characters. The more grandiose and dramatically intense the character is, the more the Catalan countertenor grows. His voice is pulpy and beautifully colored, despite suffering from a certain lack of metal, but what stands out in Sabata is his dazzling mastery of coloratura, always precise, and his overwhelming expressive power in recitatives and canto *spianato*."

– **Antoni Colomer, Operá Actual**

CASABLANCAS L'enigma di Lea (Dr. Schicksal), DVD Gran Teatre del Liceu (February 2019, reviewed March 2022)

"...Xavier Sabata threatens to steal the show as the manipulative circus-master-turned-doctor..." – **Opera Now**

SCHÖNBERG Pierrot Lunaire with a prologue: Narcissus Gran Teatre del Liceu & Francesc Prat (November 2021)

"Obviously, there is the voice, and that means having a performer who knows how to go beyond the limits of opera, lied or cabaret, because the piece is a heterogeneous mix of the genres mentioned. In the Foyer of the Liceu, Xavier Sabata offers a sublime version, of great expressive restraint but at the same time with a great communicative capacity, risks included and with good use of the *sprechstimme* technique characteristic of the Second Vienna School. More than once we have defined Avià's countertenor as a perfect singer. And this Pierrot Lunaire confirms it again." – **Jaume Radigales, ara.cat**

"On this occasion, the countertenor Xavier Sabata is in charge of interpreting the vocal score, a luxurious opportunity to show the different facets of his record. The role, more recited than sung, is one of the best examples of *Sprechgesang*, spoken voice, an expressionist technique that asks the performer to move from lyrical singing to spoken serious gutturals, interpreting melodious whispers or sudden highs. Sabata shows his versatility by intentionally attacking the notes. Especially noteworthy in the stage section, where physical presence and body work they allow you to fill the space with a sometimes tender, sometimes grotesque gesture. A grateful and dedicated protagonist in this atonal adventure that captivates despite the challenges of transporting the score to a record that is not as flashy as a soprano can play." – **Albert Mena, llegir.cat**

BRITTEN, RAMEAU, CHALK, FAURE, HANDEL & MOZART: "Mysteries of the Moment" GIO Symphonia & Francesc Prat (October 2021)

"The great claim of the show was undoubtedly the countertenor Xavier Sabata, who sang with the sensitivity and taste of a great artist." – **Xavier Paset, Diari de Girona**

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HANDEL Orlando, title role Festival Castell de Perelada (July 2021)

"The hero of Ariosto and the evening was Xavier Sabata, involved in the project since its genesis and who had previously collaborated with Villalobos. That absolute rapport with the Sevillian director gave rise to an interpretation of great dramatic stature and full of delivery. Sabata dived into the psychological recesses of the character extracting scenic and musical moments of great expressive force. His vocal line was always elegant, the coloratura precise and the accentuation adequate. A personal triumph in a role created for the great Senesino and that fits him like a ring to his finger."

- **Pablo Melendez-Haddad, *Opera Actual***

MONTEVERDI L'incoronazione di Poppea, Ottone Wiener Staatsoper (May 2021)

"The Countertenor Xavier Sabata gives an impeccable Ottone." - **Peter Jarolin, *Kurier***

"Countertenor Xavier Sabata celebrated an intense House debut as Ottone." - **Maria Scholl, *APA***

"Xavier Sabata's Ottone also seems to be on the side of reason with his creamy, masculine counter. In any case, he sings his impressive part with warmth and deep feeling..." - **Bernd Feuchtner, *Klassikinfo.de***

SCHUBERT Winterreise Auditorium of CaixaForum (March 2021)

"Sabata has shown on many occasions that he is a stage animal, with a magnificent natural ability to represent what he sings. It is not a countertenor given, but is always an earthly experience, which is to be thankful. In this stage Winterreise had the complicity of Francisco Poyato, someone from whom we could say that it is on the piano what Sabata is in the voice, two natural performances, sensitive, far from the artifice and totally dedicated to the musical experience." - **Manel Haro, *Llegir, Barcelona***

"[...] Sabata demonstrates excessive ability to overcome a challenge such as Winterreise and make a coherent and respectful version at the same time as personal." - **Gemma Bayod, *nuvol.com***

"...immense performance and hypnotic singing of a Xavier Sabata who knew how to control himself and who tore the songs apart as if they were scenes of a monodrama as contained as it was heartbreaking. His vocal line made his songs his own, overcoming extreme bass without problems." - **Pablo Melendez-Haddad, *itsnews***

HANDEL Agrippina, Ottone Orquesta Barroca de Sevilla, Enrico Onofri, Teatro de la Maestranza Seville (February 2020)

"Xavier Sabata's well-constructed Ottone also stood out from the rest of the cast because he knows Handel well: his controlled singing and beautiful timbre are ideal for this role." - **Pedro Coco, *Il mundo classico***

SCARLATTI Il Primo Omicidio, Voce di dio Aalto-Musiktheater Essen (January 2020)

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"Finally Xavier Sabata as God with a countertenor voice. Focussed singing with explosive statements of power ..."

- **Andreas Falentin, *Die Deutsche Bühne***

"Xavier Sabata portrays God with a dark-timbred countertenor voice, giving him a certain dignity."

- **Thomas Molke, *Online Musik Magazin***

HANDEL Rodelinda, Bertarido Teatro Municipal Chile (December 2019)

"Xavier Sabata was a secure Bertarido, impressive in his coloratura..." - **Matias Perez, *Opera***

HANDEL Agrippina, Ottone Il Pomo d'Oro, Maxim Emelyanychev, European tour (June 2019)

"...Fagioli's steely bravura found a foil in fellow countertenor Xavier Sabata's mellower Ottone." - **Rebecca Franks, *The Times***

"Xavier Sabata brought warmth to the part of Ottone..." - **Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times***

"I much preferred the gentler, warmer sound radiating from Xavier Sabata, who sang Ottone's exquisitely melancholy 'Voi ch'udite' with heartfelt sincerity." - **Rupert Christiansen, *The Daily Telegraph***

"As Ottone, Xavier Sabata had a beautiful countertenor." - **Sam Smith, *Music OMH***

"Xavier Sabata's sweetly sincere Ottone ... There are no sharp edges on Sabata's baroque flute of a countertenor. Soft-grained and woody it makes for an exquisite 'Vaghe fonti', duetting delightfully with the two solo recorders. Where Sabata is creamy smooth."

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

"By contrast Xavier Sabata's Ottone and Elsa Benoit's Poppea stood out for the sobriety of their portrayals in the only two really sincere roles in the opera, both sounding pure and mellifluous." - **Curtis Rogers, *Classicalsource.com***

"Countertenor Xavier Sabata convinced as Claudio's loyal general Ottone, for whom true love was more important than ascending to the imperial throne. In another of Handel's wonderful duets for voice and oboe, 'Voi che udite mio lamento', Sabata sang with heart-breaking sweetness of tone." - **Chris Sallon, *Seen and Heard International***

"Ottone fits Xavier Sabata like a glove: his full voice rather unique among counter-tenor colleagues, is here perfectly used. His 'Voi che udite il mio lamento' is the most moving moment of the evening." - **Guillaume Saintagne, *Forumopera.com***

"Ottone ... the outstanding countertenor #2, a lyrical, showstopping Xavier Sabata)..." - **Richard Sasnow, *Broadway World***

CASABLANCAS, L'enigma di Lea, Dr Schicksal Teatro del Liceu, Barcelona (May 2019, live recording)

"Xavier Sabata, on the other hand, is terrific as Schicksal, as much at home in contemporary music as in the Baroque repertory, and dominating the stage whenever he appears." - **Tim Ashley, *Gramophone 2019, live recording***

"With his remarkable and histrionic and vocal powers, it was Xavier Sabata as Schicksal who brought the most life and energy to the performance." - **Josep Maria Vidal, *Opera***

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CD: L'Alessandro amante

Vespres D'Arnadi, Dani Espasa, Aparte (released December 2018)

"... a singer whose work has always combined beauty, intelligence and psychological perception in equal measure...Sabata sings this complex programme with his customary elegance and flair. His dark, warm alto has always sounded good in slower arias, where the long lines flow with ease and his breath control is exemplary.... His coloratura, always placed at the service of characterisation or drama, can be spectacular." - **Tim Ashley, Gramophone**

"Sabata is now firmly established as one of the leading lights in the large constellation of countertenor stars.... The intrinsic beauty of his well-rounded voice, and a technique that allows him to articulate passaggi with fluent panache... There is, too, much evidence of musical intelligence." - **Brian Robins, Opera**

"Velvety timbre, intonation as perfect as the diction ... Precise ornaments merge into the expression alternately and sometimes at the same time vehement, ecstatic or tender." - **Bénédict Palaux Simonnet, Crescendo-magazine.be**

"Throughout Sabata consistently produces his outstanding countertenor voice which has radiance and a bright decisive tone with surprising warmth.. Sabata is in stunning form, singing with glorious expression, believably portraying Alexander's intense yearning to return to his lover after the end of the battle. From the same serenade is the aria 'Da tuoi lumi' sung with great appeal, focus and clarity. Sabata affords palpable sensitivity to the meaning of the text and displays impressive breath control. Also outstanding is the Handel aria 'Vano amore' from his opera Alessandro, the title role originally created by Senesino. Here Sabata provides a determined portrayal of the great hero that absolutely fizzles along, generating often frantic anxiety and bitterness, the soloist responding tremendously to the significant coloratura demands."

- **Michael Cookson, musicwebinternational.com**

"Arias by Handel, Bononcini, Pescetti, Vinci, Leo and Mancini offer a smorgasbord of musical styles and an opportunity for Sabata and the brilliant Vespres D'Arnadi under Dani Espasa to display their copious technical and artistic abilities."

- **Will Yeoman, Limelight Magazine**

CD: STRADELLA La Doriclea

Arcana (released November 2018)

"Xavier Sabata's Fidaldo, who turns ornaments more pleasingly than anyone." - **Brian Robins, Opera**

CD: HANDEL Ottone

Decca (released May 2017)

"...the beauty of Xavier Sabata's countertenor gives his lustful Adelberto a drooping, honeyed tone entirely appropriate for an aria such as 'Bel labbro'..." - **Brian Robins, Opera**

"... he [Xavier Sabata] brings emotionality and intelligence to the role of Adelberto, delivering an exquisitely poised account of 'Bel labbro'." - **Anna Picard, BBC Music Magazine**

CD: CESTI L'Orontea

Oehms (released March 2017)

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"There are stylish performances from Guy de Mey and the countertenor, Xavier Sabata, who makes an impressive debut in the role of the destitute painter Alidoro." - **Iain Fenlon, *Gramophone***

CD: CATHARSIS

Aparte (released March 2017)

"... a supple, communicative voice that is honeyed and forthright by turns." - **Erica Jeal, *The Guardian***

"...this recital album's intelligent variety of dramatic atmospheres give Xavier Sabata and Armonia Atenea a vivid workout. The music-making is never devoid of interest and richness ..." - **David Vickers, *Gramophone***

"...his singing of lyrical music is unfailingly rewarding, especially since he also boasts an excellent messa di voce... Sabata is also excellent with passaggi, articulating with precision and a high level of musicality..." - **Brian Robins, *Opera***

HANDEL Ariodante, Polinesso

Scottish Opera (February 2016)

"In his first fully staged role in a British production, Sabata adds swagger and star quality, using his huge hands, opulent vibrato and baritone laughter with panache." - **Anna Picard, *The Sunday Times***

"At the heart of that cycle is Ariodante's love rival, Polinesso. In the expert hands of Catalan counter-tenor Xavier Sabata, this evil schemer becomes a cross between cartoon cad Dick Dastardly and Shakespeare's loathsome villain Iago."

"Sabata is so experienced in playing opera's anti-heroes that he has recorded a solo album of demonic arias entitled Bad Guys. Unsurprisingly, then, he plays Polinesso with an effervescent wickedness that almost steals the show."

- **Mark Brown, *The Telegraph***

HANDEL Tamerlano

Il Pomo d'Oro - Barbican Hall, London (November 2015)

"You could also cherish sections of Xavier Sabata's Tamerlano (honeyed but heated) ..." - **Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"Sabata's Tamerlano remains one of the finest Handel operatic performances, outstandingly sung, waspishly characterised and dangerously attractive: you fully understand why his cast off fiancée [...] should still be in thrall to him."

- **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***

CD: I Dilettanti

Latinitas Nostra / Chryssicos, Aparte (released October 2014)

"Then there's Sabata's singing, intelligent yet risky, and frequently deploying baritone chest tones as well as his immaculate alto. ... Outstanding." - **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* (5 stars)**

CD: HANDEL Bad Guys

Il Pomo d'Oro / Minasi, Aparte (released January 2013)

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"Sabata has one of the richest of counter-tenor voices, his warmth of tone carrying intimations of decadence. A perceptive vocal actor, he gets to the essence of his protagonists... The beauty of Sabata's singing is breathtaking, however unsettling his characters..." - **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***