
Stephen Langridge

Selected Reviews

Götterdämmerung

Gothenburg Opera (December 2021)

“Gothenburg’s first *Ring* cycle ended with a simple but overwhelming gesture of hope...as *Götterdämmerung*’s orchestral postlude radiated optimism, a group of citizen extras planted a tree at the front of the stage, two of them embracing in front of the prompt box. ‘Tomorrow’ was scrawled on the drop curtain at the start of the performance. At the end of it, Brunnhilde’s ultimate sacrifice invited the next generation to try again at making a workable world, without the corrupting influence of the gods...The Gothenburg *Ring*’s humanity and clear symbolism have been its biggest dramatic strengths, and made for a triumphant last installment...this has been an unusually moving *Ring* and somehow a very Swedish one, with its flat-pack plywood visual aesthetic and strong sense of communal responsibility... Stephen Langridge’s most striking theatrical tool [is] the holographic river of citizens first seen in *Das Rheingold*. It returns here as a procession of climate refugees, who trudge across the stage during the orchestral interludes, pushing prams and carrying possessions. It is an effecting piece of imagery in counterpoint with Wagner’s endless melody, underlining the presence of the Rhine in the music and the story... Rogister, Langridge and the Gothenburgers have given us a *Ring* with musical and dramatic impact that is absolutely of its time, and entirely of its place. That is no small accomplishment.”

Andrew Mellor, Opera Magazine

“Stephen Langridge and his superb creative team have held the four-year cycle together despite being forced by the pandemic to produce a socially-distanced and online-only *Siegfried* last season...this production is a product of the joy of storytelling and glorious music.”

Niklas Smith, Seen and Heard International

“Closing Gothenburg Opera’s *Ring* cycle, which itself marks the 400th anniversary of the city of Gothenburg, is Stephen Langridge’s production...this ethical, ‘green’ *Ring* is surely his major achievement, there or anywhere else. It is immensely satisfying on a deep level...Langridge’s vision was unstoppable. And now one can appreciate the majesty – and the humanity – of his project...It is the sheer consistency of vision that is so powerful in Langridge’s conception of the *Ring* – a clear result of a teamwork: Langridge, conductor Evan Rogister, Alison Chitty, Paul Pyant and Annika Lindqvist together create tremendous dramatic power through simple and effective means...Langridge’s is the most significant, multi-layered, glorious, life-affirming, thought-provoking and genuinely touching *Ring* of modern times.”

Colin Clarke, Opera Now

“In 2018, the staging of Wagner’s mammoth work took sustainability and organic materials as a guiding light. An English team with opera director Stephen Langridge at the helm invested in climate awareness and pedagogy. The result has been magnificent in terms of the visual...Highly recommended.”

Camilla Lundberg, SVT Nyheter Kultur

“Drama culminates in *Götterdämmerung*. The Gothenburg Opera impresses with a stellar ensemble and concrete scenography that sets the humanity in focus. Wagner himself would have liked it.”

Helen Flensburg, Borås Tidning

“That the Gothenburg Opera, with a pandemic in the middle of the production, managed to calm all this and stage this completely innovative four-part work, can be seen as a historical achievement.”

Britt Nordberg, alba.nu

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Siegfried

Gothenburg Opera (March 2021 - streamed)

“Gothenburg’s shining *Siegfried* gloriously surmounts the challenges of producing opera in a pandemic...Stephen Langridge’s Gothenburg *Ring* cycle has as a key theme the destruction of nature, but no one in their worst nightmares could have imagined that the four-year project would come close to being derailed by a pandemic that many argue is the result of mankind’s exploitation of nature and the shrinking habitats of wild animals...The result is impressive in its continuity with the two previous parts [Das Rheingold](#) and [Die Walküre](#)...The high rates of Covid-19 in Sweden during the periods the performance was recorded caused a number of practical challenges [but] Langridge achieved elegant solutions for Siegfried’s kiss and the increasing rapture of the couple so that by the end the choreography felt natural.”

Niklas Smith, *Seen and Heard International*

“The whole production is a triumph in a time of adversity: superb...The inventiveness of Langridge's staging continues. Silent 'Narrators' add a decidedly supernatural dimension while at one point donning personal protective equipment - even Wagner's primordial world cannot escape Covid's shadow.” **Colin Clarke, *Opera Now - staging ***** music ********

“The team of Stephen Langridge (director), Alison Chitty (design) and Paul Pyant (lighting) produced a quietly radical *Parsifal* at the Royal Opera in 2013, finding both beauty and horror in unexpected corners. Their *Ring* in Gothenburg pursues a no less subtle course of rebellion against some tenaciously held conventions and traditions in staging Wagner.”

Peter Quantrill, *Arts Desk *****

“In this *Siegfried*, the predatory drive on nature has left behind a single large scrap yard, where the dragon Fafner incubates the treasure with the magic ring...In the filmed stream version, which here replaces the production missed in November, one gets advantageously close to the worst hero Siegfried and his dysfunctional family situation.”

Camilla Lundberg, *SVT Nyheter*

“Göteborg Opera's gleaming new *Siegfried*, pandemic style...Former artistic director Stephen Langridge accommodated pandemic constraints for the recorded closed-house stage premiere in December, enabling the recent international digital exposure that must be regarded as a silver lining to the extreme conditions still limiting the performing arts.”

Katherine Syer, *Bachtrack*

“Director Stephen Langridge's emphasis on environmental destruction is clear and contemporary...The idea of sustainability is repeated in scenography and costumes, where Alison Chitty used used, recyclable material; granite gray fittings and debris aesthetics break the blazing fire of the projections.”

Karin Helander, *SVD Kultur*

“A new *Siegfried*...Something new is born in the stripped-down and repetitive, in the necessary distances between the singers.”

Magnus Haglund, *Göteborgs-Posten*

“Director Stephen Langridge has toned down the mythological in *The Ring*. Giants, nibelungs, gods, demigods all become humans like you and me...Alison Chitty's realistic scrap scenography fits the concept nicely where suddenly single luminous door frames mark a change for the Wanderer.”

Kulturnytt

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In the Market for Love, Jacques Offenbach **Glyndebourne (October 2020)**

“The director Stephen Langridge made a virtue out of necessity with a production that incorporated social distancing and PPE ... a satisfying show.”

Opera Magazine

“The director Stephen Langridge ensured that the pace never flagged... All the performances, both in the pit and on stage, were imbued with the uncomplicated pleasure of people doing what they do best. And that was something to cherish.”

Opera Magazine

Die Walküre **Gothenburg Opera (December 2019)**

“Stephen Langridge’s staging is magnificently inventive. ... The impact of this Walküre, however, is huge: a modern staging that speaks to all, and to the now. Magnificent.”

Colin Clarke, *Opera Now*

“an image-strong, honest, powerful music theater that does not deconstruct the characters but delicately traces their conflicts and hopes.”

Peter Krause, *Concerti*

“Langridge’s gripping and moving Die Walküre in Gothenburg... the continuation of Stephen Langridge’s Gothenburg Ring cycle has been eagerly awaited... Paul Pyant’s lighting design again excels in creating different moods. The turntable and the moving rear wall were skilfully used... The ‘Ride of the Valkyries’ was effectively staged with plenty of well-choreographed movement I am already looking forward to Siegfried!”

Niklas Smith, *Seen and Heard International*

Rheingold **Gothenburg Opera (November 2018)**

“In all his concepts, Langridge remains more faithful to the story of Wagner’s opera than many of this (mainly German) colleagues and exponents of Regietheatre. He shows us actions that Wagner foreshadows and, through the use of Leitmotifs, later references again.”

Peter Krause, *Opera Now*

“What strikes me most about Mr Langridge’s interpretation is this connection between humanity and nature, and how violence pervades within it. This point is made several times - for example, Wotan uses the same axe to cut a branch of the World Ash Tree as to sever Alberich’s finger and eventually steal the ring. ... Wotan and Loge’s confrontation with Alberich and their cunning manipulation of him was a high point.”

Niklas Smith, *Seen and Heard International*

“Stephen Langridge has been very successful in portraying a clear storyline with strong changes of atmosphere between scenes. ... Yes, I very much hope to see the next parts of this cycle.”

Lennart Bromander, *Aftonbladet*

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“In this set, artistic director Stephen Langridge has endeavoured to work sustainably; all the decor, paint, fabrics and clothes are made from recyclable materials and the entire stage is made of a kind of plywood. Although sometimes I think the scenography is more imaginative and clever than beautiful, it is certainly made beautiful through the appealing lighting which really enhances the stage space.

The introduction, where the river Rhine is shaped by an apparently endless stream of people in shining blue fabrics, is a powerful image of the flow of human life and change, or in other words, the infinite stream that we all are a part of. It is really moving.”

Mia Gerdin, *Sveriges Radio*

“The opening image is beautiful in its portrayal of a happy ancestry: the Rhinemaidens mingle with a living stream of people wearing green-coloured fabrics while the gold child [representing the Rhinegold] tumbles around and plays.”

Sofia Nyblom, *Svenska Dagbladet*

“The idea of a “green” production feels like a deep-rooted interpretation, not a gimmick to ape contemporary trends. And, from that river of humankind to the heart-breaking plight of the “golden child”, Langridge coaxed from all his cast a richness of emotion that matters more than big-budget pyrotechnics. Langridge, whose background features spells of work with “poor” theatre and opera in non-standard settings, does not seem to crave the gold-hungry extravagance of traditional opera palaces. ... His sustainable Rheingold has no lack of heart-quickenings moments. It may be “green” but it is not austere. Yet our human imagination – embodied in those silent, necessary helpers – still has to work to make it real. On this evidence, Glyndebourne has made a bold, and timely, choice.”

Boyd Tonkin, *The Arts Desk*

“In his *Das Rheingold*, Langridge again demonstrated his gift for revealing the beating human heart in the most grandiose of works. ... It was a compelling image against the Prelude’s deep and intangible music, and the dramatic apotheosis of Langridge’s insistence that citizens of this city participate in productions.

There is nothing new in those images of modern life, but there is lots new in Langridge’s look at the corporate greed and irresponsibility that this part of the world held out against for longer than most. As Langridge admits, the bigger challenges are yet to come. But this accomplished and at times revelatory start to his *Ring* sets up the coming catastrophes very nicely indeed.”

Andrew Mellor, *Opera News*

Tristan und Isolde

Staatsoper Hannover (September 2018)

“Stephen Langridge’s production is a feast for the eyes and offers a beautiful balance between movement and stasis – definitely a good thing and not unimportant in a piece like *Tristan und Isolde*... The Niedersächsische Staatsoper comes pretty close to “Tristan bliss”.”

Udo Stephan Köhne, *Mindener Zeitung*

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“No other work by Wagner has so little plot yet focuses so explicitly on what goes on inside the characters' minds. This makes *Tristan und Isolde*, albeit a favourite in the opera canon, a work that is difficult to stage and communicate. The creative team in charge [of this production] are Stephen Langridge and, for set and costumes, Connor Murphy. They chose a very clear-cut, unobstructed perspective on the story, which allows a lot of space for those worlds inside the characters and for the text. ... There is plenty of room to play out the characters' dialogue. Stephen Langridge has the courage to focus on and trust the text. ... This is not an attempt to reinterpret the piece, the point is not to find previously undiscovered layers in this work. ... At the end, there are many well-deserved Bravos”

Christian Schuette, *Der neue Merker*

“Nothing in this coolly simple production distracts from the music. ... A more intense *Tristan [und Isolde]* has never been seen. And if you were hoping for a comprehensively intense operatic experience, you got it.”

Henning Queren, *Neue Presse*

“With its restrained set design and the clearly defined colours in light and costumes, this production seems impressively modern ... The two *Butoh* dancers, whom Stephen Langridge has added to the performance, really add another transcendental level. ... Every opera fan gets their money's worth here.”

Agnes Bührig, *NDR*

“sophisticated and introverted production”

Stefan Arndt, *Hannoversche Allgemeine*

Elektra

Gothenburg Opera (February 2017)

“Strauss and Hofmannsthal's opera on the subject, often hailed as the first Freudian opera (though it was Jung who coined the “*Electra*” complex), understandably places its psychological weight on its eponymous heroine. Not only does her voice dominate, but the orchestra projects the music inside her head — we cannot hear beyond *Elektra*. But in Stephen Langridge's new production for Gothenburg Opera, the solipsism is broken open just a touch. ... Langridge's pin-sharp direction is also seamlessly executed in Connor Murphy's elegant modern staging. Both in its details, such as the dolls and the discarded shoes of the victims, and the general design of the set — whose sweeping blind curve leaves us, and the characters, unable to detect which shadows are cast by the present and which by the past — the production draws first-rate performances from the company as well as a vital extra layer from the work itself.”

Guy Damman, *Financial Times* ****

“Stephen Langridge invents a radical and at the same time poetic realism in this gripping pin-point production, which has great pictorial powers and is true to Hofmannsthal and Strauss.”

Peter Krause, *concerti*

“Opera director Stephen Langridge is responsible for the ingenious direction. ... Interpreted in this way, *Elektra* touches my innards. It washes over my body, penetrates every pore, and makes all the small cells in my body besiege my soul! I give up in a blissful intoxication of an opera that I just cannot defend myself against!”

Thorvald Pellby Petterson, *Sveriges Radio*

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“As a whole, this is like a punch. Smart and claustrophobic.”

Per Feltzin, *SR Kulturnytt*

“It is all very well made and well conceived. ... as close to a portrayal of a psychoanalysis as you can get on an opera stage.”

Martyn Nyström, *Dagens Nyheter*

“In this iconic setting of a psychoanalytic drama there is no risk of missing the important details. Langridge works with a clarity that can be highly disturbing.”

Bo Löfvendahl, *Svenska Dagbladet*

Hamlet

Gothenburg Opera (April 2016)

“Stephen Langridge ... transferred the plot skilfully into the present tense without losing the horrid activities at the Danish court in the past: during the dark orchestral intro, the audience became a silent observer of the murder of the Danish king by his brother Claudius, using a lethal injection. A cold-blooded murderer such as this considers himself safe and relies on a surveillance state. ... The climax of this impressive production was the theatrical company who, prompted by Hamlet, re-enacts the murder of the previous king in front of the entire court.”

S. Martens, *Opernglas*

“Langridge has found canny ways around some of the score’s minor weaknesses: he had the chorus sniff cocaine before one unlikely modulation in Act I; and he plays Hamlet’s drinking song in Act II as something darkly desperate (for many it’s Thomas’s biggest act of sacrilege). The best bits (the end of the second act, the trio at the start of Act III and Ophelia’s demise) can, with the right direction, astonish. Langridge provided the right direction, both for these highpoints, and elsewhere. His contemporary Danish setting succeeds in banishing Shakespeare while his vision of Hamlet’s psychological demise broadens the limited emotional range of the opera by tapping the play (but not obviously). ... Langridge’s transferral of the gravediggers’ scene to a mortuary points up the tragedy that the score can’t quite project, and his directing of Ophelia’s drowning is spellbinding.”

Andreas Mellor, *Opera Now* ****

“In Langridge’s staging, the story has been moved to modern Denmark. The delirious royalists stand against the anti-nationalist street rallies. Fear is everywhere, as well as delusion and aggression. The thriller atmosphere in the scene with the Ghost almost reaches the chill of horror master David Cronenberg. To bring him up on a screen at a security gate is really good. It is one of the sophisticated staging solutions that make this Hamlet extremely tension-charged and Langridge’s most impressive production in Sweden so far.”

Martin Nyström, *DN kultur*

“At the Gothenburg Opera director Stephen Langridge, who is also head of the opera in Gothenburg, tried to bring back the policies of the drama again purely scenic. He has placed the production in contemporary Denmark’s monarchy, politics and barricades. The aesthetic is very much one of hoodies, jeans, corrugated sheets, spray cans and plastic. The ghost appears in a surveillance camera in a security gate. It was successfully gripping.”

Ella Petersson, *SVT*

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“Stephen Langridge’s production emphatically marks that we are in Denmark. The chorus of fickle people are at first happily waving Danish flags to King Claudius and Queen Gertrude. The people soon discover, however, like Hamlet, that something is “rotten” in the state of Denmark, as it says on the placard while Hamlet is hiding in the crowd with the help of a cap and hooded jacket. Properly entertaining - but Langridge’s Danish politicized modernization becomes a most poignant observation, where Thomas’ opera is in the first place a chamber play about a timeless and gruesome family history.”

Lennart Bromander, *Aftonbladet*

“Under Stephen Langridge’s direction, the historical Denmark has become an extremely contemporary, and at the same time both an ugly and a beautiful country, with its police force and the red-white flags, the X-ray screenings for the royal visit, with memorials, flowers and candles in the streets, and gravediggers who have been turned into pathologists; here we first see Hamlet’s father’s ghost through surveillance cameras. The story-telling is clear and unmissable.”

Per Feltzin, *Sverige Radio*

“This update to our time is edgy. And it’s impressive.”

Gunilla Brodrej, *Expressen*

Theodora

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (October 2015)

“At the Theatre des Champs Elysees, Stephen Langridge devised a staging of Handel’s oratorio that is more meditative than explicitly descriptive. [A] fine and worthy production. [Langridge’s] work also communicates more by ellipse than by representation... Theodora and Didymus could very well evade their fate by submitting to the Roman law. But they resist and forget earthly life, determined to unite for eternity in death, like Tristan and Isolde. It is this renouncement that has obviously interested Stephen Langridge. So he hides the displays that others would be eager to show, such as the execution and violation of prostitutes, by the discreet movement of panels.”

Philippe Venturini, *Les Echos*

“The staging by Brit Stephen Langridge is one of finesse and luminous simplicity. Using a timeless stage design with movable walls, playing with open or closed spaces, ... he places the singers and choir in the mental space of their psychological deliberation or their sentimental energy.”

Hélène Kuttner, *Artistik Rezo*

“Simple and uncluttered, [Langridge’s staging] focuses on the definition and the psychology of the characters. ... The question is, how far where can we fight? Terror, torture, murder, and threats of rape as a political weapon of totalitarian power are at the centre of the piece. Timeless though terribly current, as Stephen Langridge makes no specific contemporary references.”

Lorenzo Ciavarini Azzi, *France TV Info*

“[Langridge’s] clever minimalist staging”

Olivier Brunel, *Concertonet*

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Le Nozze di Figaro

Gothenburg Opera (September 2014)

"A Figaro could not be more perfect. ... Mr Langridge keeps the action in the same location but moves it forward to the final years of the Franco regime in Spain in the 1970s. This involves no violence to the plot and allows some lovely comic touches, in particular Cherubino's rock-star act in "Voi che sapete" and Figaro's sky-blue wedding suit (and disco steps!). The direction and choreography are particularly fine in the ensemble scenes where the interaction between the characters is perfect, as is the elegant choreography of the chorus scenes. Moving the Countess' "Dove sono" to straight after the Count's "Vedrò, mentr'io sospiro" was inspired – thanks to the set the Countess sings of her determination to regain Almadiva's love while the audience sees him presiding over the rigged hearing which will force Figaro to marry Marcellina in the room behind."

Niklas Smith, Seen and Heard International

"Artistic director of Gothenburg Opera Stephen Langridge moves the abstruse and muddled plot of Lorenzo Da Ponte's libretto from the late eighteenth century into a timeless setting. ... Figaro in Gothenburg: this is how to do opera!"

Waltraut Anna Kautz, bachtrack

Parsifal

Royal Opera House (November 2013)

"The triumph of this new interpretation, directed by Stephen Langridge and designed by Alison Chitty, is that it de-sanctifies Parsifal : all trace of pseudo-sacred mumbo-jumbo is removed. What we get instead is a visual shorthand, contemporary but timeless, that illuminates the opera's philosophical complexity while keeping the narrative both straightforward and continually mesmerising. Across a five-hour span, that is no mean feat... The bottom line is that Langridge has divined a Parsifal of intellectual fibre and visual eloquence, matched to a musical performance of exceptional sensitivity under Antonio Pappano. His is not a slow Parsifal, but a spacious, urgent reading with oodles of sensuousness in Act Two and disarming tenderness in the Good Friday music."

Andrew Clark, Financial Times *****

"Stephen Langridge's new production confronts this troubled and troubling piece unflinchingly... It's certainly a dramatically consistent world, dominated by the intensive-care cubicle in which Amfortas is contained, and hardly altering even for the deliberately unexotic realm – flower maidens in headscarves – that Willard White's Klingsor rules in the second. And instead of ignoring or sidestepping the more unsavoury aspects of the libretto, Langridge does attempt to tackle many of them, sometimes in lurid detail, so that the disjunction between them and Wagner's sublime music is often disturbingly clear."

Andrew Clements, The Guardian *****

"He (Langridge) justifies it in the two long hours of the first act, establishing the narrative superbly in a clear way that builds steady tension through extended time-spans and adopts a cool, considered line on Wagner's pseudo-Christian ritualism — one of the divisive issues in the piece."

Michael White, The New York Times

"Stephen Langridge's new production of Wagner's last opera, Parsifal, grapples intelligently with the big issues of this problematic work."

Barry Millington, Evening Standard *****

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“What is Wagner trying to tell us about Christianity, Buddhism, race, blood, sin, redemption? In Langridge's production, laden with signposts and visual rubric, there was plenty of opportunity to ponder these questions.”

Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer* ****

The Minotaur

Royal Opera House – Revival (January 2013)

“First performed in 2008, Stephen Langridge’s exemplary production of *The Minotaur* returned, with mostly the same cast and greater clarity and force.”

Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer*

“Stephen Langridge’s production is stylish, playing out in the wan sunlight and oppressive darkness of Alison Chitty’s set.”

Erica Jeal, *The Guardian* *****

“Stephen Langridge’s production, designed by Alison Chitty, is as sure-footed as ever.”

Barry Millington, *The Evening Standard*

“Awesome, forbidding, an opera of unremitting dark power... Birtwistle’s voice is so compelling, and the production so arresting, that the slowly unfolding drama never lets go. Stephen Langridge’s simple but striking production skillfully blends ancient and modern, placing the *Minotaur* in a circular lair, like the orchestra of a Greek theatre (or a bull-ring) and overseen by a masked Chorus.”

Richard Fairman, *Financial Times*

“Birtwistle’s visceral piece has lost none of its immediacy since it first appeared at Covent Garden. In fact, although the shock value is as high in Stephen Langridge’s skilful production, the relationships between its major characters seem more intense, and the opera’s psychological message hits harder.”

Neil Fisher, *The Times*

Wake

Nationale Reisopera (May 2010)

“...a visually enthralling production by Stephen Langridge.”

Hugh Canning, *Opera*

“...visual virtuosity in direction and stage design.”

Menno Van Duren, *Twente Courant*

The Damnation of Faust

Lyric Opera of Chicago (February 2010)

“Hector Berlioz never meant his *légend dramatique, La Damnation de Faust*, to be staged, but modern directors cannot resist the challenge. Stephen Langridge took up the daunting task with his brilliant new production for Lyric Opera of Chicago at the Civic Opera House. The Lyric’s first staging of any Berlioz work was striking in its edginess, wit and

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unabashed theatricality. Langridge downplayed the work's inherent Romantic sentimentality, and the result was a contemporary gloss on the Faust legend of the sort the sardonic devil might have dreamt up for the amusement of guests at a hip soirée in Hades.”

John von Rhein, *Opera Magazine*

“...a brilliantly conceived achievement...the stagecraft of this production is stunning.”

Betty Mohr, *South Town Star Chicago*

The Minotaur

Royal Opera House – World Premiere (November 2008)

“The taut splendour of Stephen Langridge's production, brilliantly conducted by Antonio Pappano and inoffensively designed by Alison Chitty, gives it a succes d'estime.”

Andrew Clark, *Financial Times*

“...the theatrical experience is the thing: it is overwhelming.”

Colin Anderson, *The Opera Critic*

“Entirely in keeping with Birtwistle's music, Stephen Langridge's production unfolds the drama unfussily, with clarity and directness”

Christopher Ballantine, *Opera Magazine*

Madame Butterfly

Den Norske Opera & Ballet (September 2012)

“In every way this performance was a big, impressive event. The music is allowed to have the desired effect. It carries you along with it...Langridge has set the production in World War II and incorporated a new aspect, incarnated in the boy born to Butterfly, who now as an adult looks back on the drama. This is done with great sensitivity.”

Ståle Wikshåland, *Dagbladet*

The Marriage of Figaro

Grange Park Opera (July 2006)

“Just occasionally, a director like Stephen Langridge steers a cast that truly merits laughter... an exemplary production.”

David Benedict