



Ruby Hughes

Soprano

RHIAN SAMUEL/BERG/MAHLER “Clytemnestra”, BBCNOW /Jac Van Steen (BIS/Naxos)

Ruby Hughes erweist sich immer deutlicher als eine Schlüsselsängerin des frühen 21. Jahrhunderts.

Ruby Hughes is increasingly proving to be a key singer of the early 21st century. Dr. Jürgen Schaarwächter, Klassik.com, June 2020, (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 *Rückert-Lieder* with mesmerising poise and finesse: I’ve never heard the opening line of ‘Ich atmet’ sung more beautifully
Malcolm Hayes. BBC Music Magazine, March 2020 (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, Jan 2020 (5)*

[...] it’s Hughes’s performance that carries the whole enterprise: vivid, powerful and superbly committed, bringing a real complexity 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, Jan 2020

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, Jan 2020

Gramophone Podcast: Ruby Hughes on Rhian Samuel’s *Clytemnestra*
Listen [Here](#)
James Jolly, Jan 2020

In *Clytemnestra* (BIS), 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, Jan 2020

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, Jan 2020

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, Feb 2020

[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, March 2020

BERG Seven Early Songs, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Pablo González
"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, Jan 2020

Tre Voci, Kings Place

...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, Nov 2019

HANDEL Brockes-Passion, The Academy of Ancient Music / Richard Egarr
[...] here Ruby Hughes' fresh, strong soprano and clarity of line conveyed the passionate faith of the Faithful Soul

Claire Seymour, Opera Today, April 2019

Ruby Hughes [gave] a performance which powerfully identified with the character's reactions... her final contribution was a striking accompanato where the music really did react to the drama of the words.

Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill, April 2019

[Ruby Hughes] offered an extraordinary meditation of the Crown of Thorns, raising the emotional temperature...
Classical Source (5), April 2019*

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, Jan 2020

HANDEL Brockes-Passion, The Academy of Ancient Music / Richard Egarr Recording AAM 007

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

MAHLER Symphony No.2 in C minor "Resurrection" Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä, BIS Records

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, March 2019

HANDEL Theodora (title role), Potsdamer Winteroper

Die walisische Sopranistin Ruby Hughes in der Rolle der Theodora überzeugte mit nahezu himmlischen Tonlagen.

The Welsh soprano Ruby Hughes in the role of Theodora convinced with almost heavenly colours.

Mathias Richter, Märkische Allgemeine, November 2018

Die Sopranistin Ruby Hughes in der Titelpartie ist insgesamt ein Glücksfall. Agilität und Stimmfarben in den lyrischen Passagen ergänzen sich bei ihr wunderbar.

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

Klaus Büstrin, Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten, November 2018

Ruby Hughes drückt all das Leiden der Theodora in ihren weichen, oft unfassbar leisen Tönen aus. Dazu spielt sie authentisch und packend: Bis zu ihrem Tod wirkt Theodora noch wie ein geschundenes Wesen, danach strahlt sie als erlöster Engel größte Präsenz aus.

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, November 2018

BACH B Minor Mass, London Handel Players

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, June 2018

Handel's Last Prima Donna | Giulia Frasi in London, OAE

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, 2018

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, March 2018

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, 2018*

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, 31 March 2018

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, 10 April 2018

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, April 2018

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, May 2018

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

BBC Radio 3's Record Review with Andrew MacGregor & Simon Heighes, 2018

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, 2018

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, April 2018

Recital with Joseph Middleton, Wigmore Hall

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, Feb 2018 (5)*

Heroines of Love and Loss, Mime Brinkmann, Jonas Nordberg, BIS Records

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, June 2017

"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, June 2017 (translated from the French)

"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, July 2017 (translated from the German)

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, April 2017 (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, March 2017

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), March 2017*

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), March 2017*

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

Remy Franck, Pizzicato Magazine, March 2017

Nocturnal Variations (debut recital disc) Joseph Middleton, Champs Hill Records (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, May 2016

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, May 2016

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)*

PURCELL Songs Realised by Britten, Champs Hill Records (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 soprano Ruby Hughes.

Rupert Christiansen, The Sunday Telegraph (5) May 2016*

...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

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 March 2016

MAHLER Symphony No. 4, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Jesús López Cobos

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 Jan 2016

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, Jan 2016

WATKINS Remember, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Garry Walker

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, Feb 2016

PURCELL The Fairy Queen Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Berliner Philharmonie, Rinaldo Alessandrini

Outstanding here was soprano Ruby Hughes, who shaped with moving intensity the great lamentation aria 'O let me weep'.
Ursula Wiegand, Neue Merkur Wien, January 2016

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) Jan 2016

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, Jan 2016

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 Jan 2016

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 Jan 2016