



Hilary Summers
Contralto

BARRY Alice's Adventures Underground, ROH

It's almost invidious to pick out other names from either cast in what is such a brilliantly executed piece, but Hilary Summers is a formidable White Queen
Andrew Clements The Guardian Feb 2020

HANDEL Jephtha, Scottish Chamber Orchestra BBC Proms

Her portrait of maternal despair was vivid
The Times Aug 2019

Hilary Summers, as the hero's mother Storge, brought velvet smoothness to her forebodings

The Scotsman Aug 2019

MENDELSSOHN Die erste Walpurgisnacht, Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Hilary Summers' warm and expansive contralto added gravitas to the Old Woman
Susan Nickalls, The Scotsman, November 2018

KURTAG Fin de Partie, Teatro alla Scala ('Nell')

[...] Hilary Summers as Nell, whose gentle, confiding delivery of the Roundelay gets this extraordinary, unforgettable piece under way.
Andrew Clements, The Guardian, November 2018 (5)*

Nell (British contralto Hilary Summers touchingly, absurdly romantic)
Fiona Maddocks, The Observer, November 2018 (5)*

Old Nagg (the tenor Leonardo Cortellazzi) and Nell (the contralto Hilary Summers), stuffed by Beckett into side-by-side ashcans, exist in a sphere of ethereal nostalgia and thread-thin high notes that Ms. Summers, in particular, spins with the eerie softness of elderly skin.

Zachary Woolfe, New York Times, November 2018 (Critic's Pick)

HANDEL Giulio Cesare (Cornelia), Early Opera Company

Musically, both evenings were a real treat. Countertenor Iestyn Davies's Caesar and Hilary Summers's Cornelia were both of a standard to turn a well-worn piece of musical advice on its head... one of the qualities that made Davies and Summers so unusual and exciting was the almost instrumental freedom and accuracy of their delivery, characteristics which help make Handel's often virtuosic writing shine as it should.

Michael Dervan, The Irish Times, August 2017

The role of Cornelia is arguably the most affecting since her grief at the loss of her husband Pompey is its unchanging characteristic. But the nobility of her suffering is never wearying, so eloquent is her music. Or so it seemed sung by the wonderful Hilary Summers – and her true alto timbre, richness and range has even encompassed the role of Cesare himself. If in the age of the ubiquitous mezzo-soprano designation, someone should start a Society for the Preservation of the Contralto Voice, I propose Hilary Summers as the SPCV's first President.

Roy Westbrook, Bachtrack, 12 April 2018

Hilary Summers utilised her outstanding contralto to deliver a convincing portrayal of a heart-broken Cornelia

Sam Smith, MusicOMH, 15 April 2018

WAGNER Siegfried (Erda), Saffron Opera Group

And as ever when hearing Wagner in the concert hall, there were things to discover and to delight in, as well as those moments when the whole performance seemed to transcend itself, and the lack of any theatrical setting ceased to matter. Here, the most spellbinding of those moments came at the beginning of the third act, with the confrontation between Hilary Summers' regal Erda and Greenan's Wanderer – It is moments like these that make ventures like Saffron Opera's so worthwhile.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 14 February 2017

Hilary Summers' majestic contralto gave Erda's utterances a suitable glow of intensity.

Peter Reed, Opera Magazine, April 2017

GERALD BARRY Alice's Adventures Underground, Britten Sinfonia

Hilary Summers' inimitable contralto pairs off with a single double-bass for the dormouse reverie...

David Nice, The Arts Desk, 29 November 2016

Contralto Hilary Summers is resplendent as the White Queen...

George Hall, The Stage, 29 November 2016

Hilary Summers, Peter Tantsits and Mark Stone also thrived on Barry's high-wire vocal acrobatics.

Mark Valencia, Bachtrack, 29 November 2016

HANDEL Israel in Egypt, The King's Consort, VIVAT

...contralto Hilary Summers sings the assuaging 'Bringe sie hinein' ('Thou shalt bring them in') with mingled gravity and warmth...

Richard Wigmore, Gramophone Magazine, 23 March 2016

All the soloists make their mark, particularly Hilary Summers' even alto...

George Hall, BBC Music Magazine, April 2016

NYMAN War Work, Michael Nyman Band

Contralto Hilary Summers is the soloist, her dark, plummy tones meshing perfectly with Nyman's brassy-tinged textures.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 10 December 2015

GILBERT & SULLIVAN HMS Pinafore, Scottish Opera (Edinburgh International Festival)

...a cast of British singers perfectly matched to their roles [...] Her glorious dark alto was part of a lovely range of voices...

Herald Scotland, 9 June 2015

AYRES Peter Pan, Welsh National Opera

Hilary Summers is touching as the distraught Mrs Darling and feistily ladette-like as the bloodthirsty Tiger Lily.

5 Richard Morrison, The Times, 19 May 2015*

Hilary Summers as the Mother and Tiger Lily gave strong, clear and well-drawn performances...

Mike Smith, Wales Online, 19 May 2015

STRAVINSKY Oedipus Rex, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sakari Oramo (BBC Proms)

Then there was the extraordinary Hilary Summers whose showing as Jocasta negotiated the near-impossible register switches and freakish excitement of her big number with great aplomb and clever musicianship. The drama is most certainly in the vocal pyrotechnics - you don't need to add too much to their histrionics. I loved the plangency and sinuousness of her blue-note bluesiness...

Edward Seckerson, The Arts Desk, 8 August 2014

The cast was a fine one...Hilary Summers was a true contralto Jocasta, regal and dismissive when in full flight.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 4 August 2014

BOULEZ Le Marteau Sans Maître, Aurora Orchestra, Franck Ollu

Hilary Summers delivered René Char's texts with insouciance and a sense of marvel, despite the extreme vocal challenges.

Fiona Maddocks, The Observer, 14 October 2013

Hilary Summers, hieratic and incantatory, was the alto soloist - utterly mesmerising, above all towards the close, as Boulez dissolves words into pure sound.

5, Tim Ashley, The Guardian, 13 October 2013*

PURCELL Dido and Aeneas, Wiener Festwochen

It was a wonderful performance, which Summers herself clearly enjoyed, made all the more riveting by her complete vocal command of the part.

Susan Doering, Vienna Review, 1 June 2009

Led by an Amazon of a sorceress in Hilary Summers...spat and shrieked their vowels, cackling maniacally and revelling in Purcell's word-setting.

The Times, October 2009

CRUMB Night of the Four Moons The Nash Ensemble (BBC Proms)

"The first of the Lorca settings, Night of the Four Moons, has a darkly impassioned sound world, beautifully captured by mezzo-soprano Hilary Summers."

Ivan Hewett The Daily Telegraph, BBC Proms, 7 September 2009



BOULEZ Le Marteau Sans Maître Deutsche Grammophon

with Hilary Summers as the rich-toned mezzo, relishes every particle of the settings of the three René Char poems...

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, March 2005