



Carolyn Sampson

Soprano

BERLIOZ Les nuits d'été, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, François Leleux

The soprano Carolyn Sampson made a marvellous soloist for Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, her purity of tone matched by her dramatic ability to inhabit the spirit of each song in the cycle as though it were a perfectly contained world.

Simon Thompson, The Times, February 2019

HANDEL "Abbandonata: Italian Cantatas" The King's Consort, Robert King, Vivat

Her instrument is glorious and her readings exquisitely crafted [...] This new recording exemplifies Sampson's rare sensibility, as both performer and intellectual. [...] in *Abbandonata* Sampson plumbs fresh expressive depths.

Berta Joncus, BBC Music Magazine, December 2018

The highlight comes early: Sampson is hard put to better the stunning intensity of the disc's second track, *Ah! crudele*, from the best-known cantata, *Armida abbandonata*, though the drama of the longer *Agrippina condotta a morire* runs it close, full of vicious recriminations, as the empress is led to her death, which elide the differences between arias and recitatives with passionate conviction.

Nicholas Kenyon, The Guardian, October 2018

Sampson is superb and invokes sympathy and awe, especially when vainly attempting to convince the elements to wreak revenge upon the man she loves. [...] *Agrippina condotta a morire* is the most ambitious and elaborate cantata here, Sampson's portrayal of a ruthless Roman empress as witty as it is exciting. She can do it all, invoking fear, fury and sympathy, her voice retaining its allure even when she's singing at full tilt.

Graham Rickson, The Arts Desk, October 2018

Carolyn Sampson remains one of the UK's finest singers; she has recorded Handel successfully for BIS and Vivat, and this most recent Vivat release is a clear winner. The sadness of the aria "Ah! Crudele" from *Armida abbandonata* HWV105 is remarkable. [...] Sampson's decorations of line in the opening aria include perfect trills, anticipating Handel's extensive use of them in the instrumental parts of the central part of this da capo aria. Her legato, too, matches any instrument who dares to double her. [...] Carolyn Sampson is magnificent, raw in "Rendo cenere il tiranno," infinitely touching in "Come, O Dio!" where her plangent vibratoless sustained notes speak volumes. Sampson's breathless way with the brief aria "Su lacerate" is brilliantly exciting [...] this is a prime release.

Colin Clarke, MusicWeb International, January 2019

MAHLER Symphony No.4, Minnesota Orchestra, Osmo Vänskä

The symphony's finale is a song depicting a child's idyllic experiences of heaven, often performed in ways that seem either too knowingly adult or exaggeratedly infantile. The soprano Carolyn Sampson walked that particular interpretive tightrope with insouciance. Stationed in an unorthodox position on a rear-stage riser beside the trumpets, she looked and sounded ethereal [...]

Terry Blain, Star Tribune, June 2018

Smoothly gliding between openness and restraint, Sampson helped bring the season's final program to a sweet conclusion. To borrow from the movement's text, her angelic voice gladdened my senses.

Rob Hubbard, St Paul's Pioneer Press June 2018

SCHUBERT 'A Soprano's Schubertiade', BIS Records

There can be no argument with the statement that Carolyn Sampson is one of the great singers of our time [...] This is a wonderful recording, demonstrating from both performers their customary probing intelligence and sensitive insight. Carolyn Sampson is blessed by the rare combination which blends such thoughtfulness with beauty of voice and diction. [...] If this does not figure highly as a disc of the year, there is no justice. It is one that will move the listener beyond admiration to love.

Michael Wilkinson, MusicWeb-International, June 2018

It's a sign when you have to finish listening a complete disc of single songs because each one makes you long for the next. And because the singing is so wonderful, even the most celebrated pieces seem so much more beautiful than you remembered them. The British soprano Carolyn Sampson – crystal-clear timbre, each syllable audible – has made a name with recital discs that are more than a compilation of songs. A Soprano's Schubertiade too is such an intelligent album. [...] It doesn't take more than piano and voice to tell everything. Schubert knew that and this is stressed with a golden pen on Sampson's first Schubert album.

Micha Spel, NRC Handelsblad, 30 mei 2018 [translated from the Dutch]

BACH/HANDEL Helsinki Baroque Orchestra

Three and a half minutes of bliss. [...] the soprano Carolyn Sampson and the trumpeter Nicholas Emmerson breathed into the long, radiant phrases of Handel's Eternal Source of Light Divine, gliding effortlessly over the summer meadow haze of the strings of the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra. [...] Sampson's unforced agility, smiling tone and exquisitely spun phrasing in Bach's cantata Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen (BWV51) gave pep and brilliance.

Anna Picard, The Times, 9 January 2018

PURCELL, The King's Consort

Sampson looked and sounded the epitome of elegance and expressiveness. Her smoothly polished soprano is a perfect fit for Purcell's melodic fecundity. The tone was clear as a bell, the diction superb: the words seemed to float on the melody. And, the purity and easefulness of Sampson's sound production is wonderfully suited to Purcell's rhythmic shifts and quirks which were pliantly absorbed into the flowing phrases. Moreover, while Sampson's tone is unblemished it is never colourless: she imbued the clean line with judicious expressive radiance.

Claire Seymour, Opera Today, 26 October 2017

PURCELL/SCHUMANN/QUILTER/MENDELSSOHN Lost is My Quiet, lestyn Davies, Joseph Middleton; BIS Records

The art of vocal duetting is exemplified at its best in this recital by two of today's finest British singers [...] applying considerable judgement to their task, the voices of Carolyn Sampson and Iestyn Davies are well matched here in terms of colour and vibrancy – an accomplishment they deliver throughout. [...] highlights include Sampson moving around the notes of Purcell's *If music be the food of love* with impeccable skill, while she makes time stand still in Schumann's *Stille Liebe*.

BBC Music Magazine November 2017 (5 Choral & Song Choice)*

Carolyn Sampson and Iestyn Davies make a symbiotic partnership in these assorted duets, their tone (not least their control of vibrato) and style ideally matched [...] Amid the duets, Sampson sings 'If music be the food of love' with an easy fluidity and grace. [...] With Middleton always an animated partner, the singers blend mellifluously in all those caressing thirds and sixths, with refined phrasing and an unselfconscious charm [...] Sampson's touching simplicity in 'Drink to me only with thine eyes', and her exuberance and ardour in 'Love's Philosophy', with the voice soaring gloriously to the song's climax. [...] Here is a captivating, unhackneyed programme, presented by singers – a double act in a thousand – and pianist with a style and allure it would be hard to beat.

Richard Wigmore, Gramophone, November 2017 (Editor's Choice)

Sampson's and Davies's voices blend perfectly, and they sing Britten's realisations of *Sound the Trumpet* and *Lost Is My Quiet* stylishly, but the fleetier Mendelssohn numbers are the real delight.

Hugh Canning, The Sunday Times, 22 October 2017

Carolyn Sampson's soprano sparkles and Iestyn Davies's countertenor glides through the air in this compilation, individually and in duet. [...] Early in the opening duet, Purcell's *Sound the Trumpet*, Sampson throws out a blingy octave leap that stands out a mile – but it's a moment of exuberance, not a sign of liberties to come.

From the beautifully interwoven Purcell title track to the mellifluous, dirndl-wearing duets by Mendelssohn and Schumann to the bittersweet drawing-room melodies of Roger Quilter, what's on offer here is beautifully judged, the two voices playing off each other and sharing nuanced expression. They shine in the solos, too, [...] Sampson making something poignantly lovely of Quilter's *Drink to Me Only*.

Erica Jeal, The Guardian, September 2017 (5)*

This is an enchanting recital, combining songs and duets using both English and German texts, by two wonderful British singers and a warmly sensitive accompanist. [...] [Iestyn Davies] blending in seamless rapport with the shinningly elegant lyric soprano of Carolyn Sampson [...] while this isn't a competition, Sampson does give him a run for his money in Schumann's *Stille Liebe* and in the more mercurial *Aufträge* and Mendelssohn's *Neue Liebe*. [...] As a final *bonne bouche*, everyone lets their hair down for the catchy and kitschy operetta waltz *Love Calls Through the Summer Night*, bringing this absolutely delicious recording to an upbeat conclusion.

Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph, September 2017 (5)*

JS BACH Cantatas for Soprano, Freiburger Barokorchester, Petra Mullejans; Harmonia Mundi

Carolyn Sampson is arguably the most experienced, assured and wide-ranging of current Bach sopranos. With this latest recital she does not disappoint. Sensitivity to the evolving line and projection of text, both of which she manages with warmth and dark-hued reflection, forms a consistent part of her delectable armoury. [...] This is really worth waiting for.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Gramophone Magazine, May 2017

...Mein Herze schwimmt in Blut, its remorseful, lamenting powers wonderfully expressed here by the English soprano Carolyn Sampson. It's a tribute to her linguistic as well as bright-voiced musical talents that she is the chosen soloist with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra.

Fiona Maddocks, The Guardian, 14 May 2017

Die Sopranistin Carolyn Sampson und das Freiburger Barockorchester (FBO) interpretieren Sopran-Kantaten Johann Sebastian Bachs auf CD. Wie feinfühlig und lustvoll da musiziert wird! [...]. Carolyn Sampsons Sopran hat ja die keineswegs alltägliche Tugend, wie ein Stern zu leuchten: in der Höhe, die nie angestrengt wirkt. Eine sehr natürliche, zu Bach bestens passende Stimme, die in der lyrischen Mitte ihre Basis hat.

(The soprano Carolyn Sampson and the Freiburger Barockorchester (FBO) interpret soprano cantatas Johann Sebastian Bach on CD. How sensitive and passionate it is! [...] Carolyn Sampson's soprano has the virtuosic quality of a star: which never struggles in the height. A very natural voice which has its base in the lyric center perfectly suited to Bach.)

Johannes Adam, Badische Zeitung, 3 June 2017

Una joya discográfica. (A jewel of a disc)

Jesús Vega, El Nuevo Herald, June 2017

BEETHOVEN Missa Solemnis, Orchestra of the 18th Century, Daniel Reuss (Glossa)

The soprano Carolyn Sampson sings with a rare mixture of power and purity

Damian Thompson, The Spectator, 29 July 2017

FLEURS recital tour, USA

Sampson's approach to the songs reflected her pedigree as one of our finest early music sopranos. While her technique itself was remarkable — the trills in Britten's arrangement of Purcell's "Sweeter than Roses" were as unpretentious, effortless, and wondrous as the act of breathing itself — she chose to communicate primarily by tone rather than word painting. [...] Sampson's strength and security lower in her range, freshness on high, and delight in singing showed her the rightful successor of the great lieder artists of the past, a great and treasurable artist in her own right.

Jason Victor Serinus, San Francisco Performances, 19 May 2017

Through the roughly hour and a half recital, the duo painted an exemplary picture of all that artistry is capable of. From some subtle seeming sprechgesang in Schumann's "Röselein, Röselein" to a sultry breathiness in tone in Venezuelan composer Hanh's "Offrande," Sampson is a true artist, painting picture after picture from her palate of varying tonal colors and vivid musicality.
James Monroe Števkó, OperaWire, 15 May 2017

DEBUSSY Pelleas and Melisande, Scottish Opera (Melisande)

Sampson's delicately coloured tone gets every word across in a wonderfully nuanced way.

Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 24 February 2017

...both Andrei Bondarenko and Carolyn Sampson give performances of consummate sensibility and grace.

Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph, 27 February 2017 (5)*

The leads respond with subtle performances. [...] Sampson sings with a quiet intensity that belies her character's ethereal appearance.

Allan Radcliffe, The Times, 27 February 2017

Mélisande – a vocally and dramatically triumphant Carolyn Sampson

Susan Nickalls, The Scotsman, 25 February 2017

As Melisande, Carolyn Sampson offers tonal delicacy and a credible suggestion of childlike innocence.

George Hall, The Stage, 24 February 2017

Dressed in white, with a voice that (like Debussy's score) seemed lit from within, she trod a remarkably controlled line between impassive and impulsive; the unignorable focus of every scene in which she appeared.

Richard Bratby, The Spectator, 9 March 2017

MONTEVERDI motets, Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr

Both singers sang throughout with piercing accuracy and clarity, though only Sampson had that warm sensuous quality which really brings Monteverdi to life.

Ivan Hewett, The Telegraph, 8 December 2016

But this superb evening belonged to two sopranos – Carolyn Sampson and Rowan Pierce – whose duets and solos reflected Monteverdi at his most gravely serene. Pierce, being younger, may not yet possess Sampson's super-refined control of phrasing and dynamics, but their voices made a lovely meld. Monteverdi's music maintained a graceful equality between them, letting them interlace, echo each other, and at climactic moments soar off solo into the empyrean.

Michael Church, The Independent, 14 December 2016 (5)*

A Verlaine Songbook, BIS Records, with Joseph Middleton

The performances are breathtakingly beautiful. As expected from the impeccable Sampson there is some astonishingly pure and precisely controlled

vocalism, but lest she be typecast as an early music specialist there has been a perceptible increase in richness and colour over the last few years. Her delivery is mostly intimate and confessional, the full voice used sparingly so at key moments when it opens out and expands the result is spine-tingling. [...] Another first-class release from a dedicated artist with one of the loveliest voices of our time. This is something to savour.

Warwick Arnold, Limelight Magazine, 22 March 2017 (5)*

Sampson's pure, shining tone matches the finesse of this repertoire and her lower range sometimes has the softness and subtle qualities of a deep flute [...] the early Debussy settings are splendidly etched, with a fine mix of deep feeling and objectivity.

Jessica Duchon, BBC Music Magazine (5), February 2017*

Sampson and Middleton are very much at home in this repertoire, frequently functioning as an indivisible unit with sound and sense beautifully fused [...] texts are scrupulously delivered. She's in excellent voice too, her tone clear and silvery, her upper registers exquisite [...] Very fine.

Tim Ashley, Gramophone Magazine, December 2016

Sampson adores these songs, caressing the text with her beautiful, pure soprano, particularly those that dwell on the correlation between nature and the emotions. Her partnership with Middleton is inspired.

Stephen Pritchard, The Observer, 13 November 2016

Ms Sampson is a richly endowed guide with a beautiful lyric voice well suited to French melodies: it is flexible, she has a sure feeling for the poetry and she is careful with nuance. [...] Like everything else on this disc, Carolyn Sampson sings them with excellent diction and deep involvement. A garland of roses to everyone concerned.

Göran Forsling, MusicWeb International, December 2016

MOZART Mass in C minor; Exsultate, Jubilate CD Bach Collegium Japan/Suzuki (BIS Records)

...in 'Et incarnatus est', the sweetest of the disc's many ravishing moments, Carolyn Sampson arabesques effortlessly up to the stratosphere in a slow dance with solo woodwinds [...] On what other recording of the Mass do the principal vocalists alter their timbres on demand to perfect their blend? Yet Sampson takes the palm. [...] Sampson's suave coloratura[...] shows us that Mozart, like Bach, took inspiration from praising God.

"Recording of the Month" Berta Joncus, BBC Music Magazine (5), January 2017*

...above it all, the crystalline beauty of soloist Carolyn Sampson's soprano, floating like a ministering angel [...] an exhilarating *Exsultate, Jubilate* with Sampson on top form.

Stephen Pritchard, The Guardian (5), 16 October 2016*

COME ALL YE SONGSTERS with Jonathan Manson (viol) Laurence Cummings (hpd) Elizabeth Kenny (lute) (Wigmore Live)

But it's Sampson whose flexible voice (expanding from near-white simplicity in 'Fairest isle' to heightened dramatic scope for 'Not all my torments' or 'I see she flies me') keeps us listening through an inevitably fragmented sequence of short works. Two larger-scale works [...] anchor the programme and give her greatest vocal scope, shaping Purcell's arioso-style writing with care and a sense of structural balance and pacing.

Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone Magazine, September 2016

But of course it's soprano Carolyn Sampson's peerless Purcell that steals the show – whether inhabiting tortured madness, or the airborne caressing grace of an opening set from *The Fairy Queen*. By way of encore, 'Fairest Isle', she bids farewell with a guileless, eloquent, spellbinding simplicity.

Paul Riley BBC Music Magazine (5), October 2016*

HANDEL Orlando, The English Concert, Harry Bicket

...come the second act and her pretty "nightingale" aria, she struck form, stopping the show with her bouncy third act 'Amor è qual vento'

Rupert Christiansen, The Daily Telegraph, 2 March 2016 (5)*

Carolyn Sampson – a soprano we don't see enough on the opera stage – made a graceful Dorinda, vocally agile and adding a silvery sheen to the top of ensembles."

Alexandra Coghlan, The Arts Desk, 2 March 2016

In contrast to Morley's delicately nuanced singing, Sampson produces moments of sly comedy, as well as vocal beauty to make time stand still.

Michael Church, The Independent, 2 March 2016 (5)*

At the emotional heart of this performance was the unlucky-in-love shepherdess Dorinda, sung with fresh, sweet lightness by Carolyn Sampson. Her Act II Nightingale Song, with solo violin as songbird, was a standout moment, only to be topped by her dazzling *Amor è qual vento* in Act III, in which she sings of the anguish of love.

Rebecca Franks, The Times, 1 March 2016 (5)*

Sampson was fantastic throughout. Her easy, brilliant sound in all registers made every phrase sound as natural as speech. Dorinda opens the second act with the cavatina "Quando spieghi," taken on the slower side by Bicket, perhaps to let Sampson's youthful sparkle fill the hall. It did so spectacularly, and was a prelude to an act packed with some of the most beautiful Baroque singing heard in New York in years."

George Grella, New York Classical Review, 14 March 2016

Carolyn Sampson's Dorinda embodied the torture of incurable obsession, bringing real pathos to her yearning Act II aria, "Se mi rivolgo al prato".

Hannah Nepil, Financial Times, 2 March 2016 (4)*

Almost stealing the show was Carolyn Sampson's Dorinda, but this is no ordinary shepherdess. Playing host to knights, magicians and royalty in her humble woodland cottage, she too has some showstopping coloratura, delivered by Sampson with hands on hips. But she also melted the heart with the sighs of her nightingale aria and the pastoral-style siciliano, enhanced by Harry Bicket's daringly slow but impeccably judged accompaniment.

Barry Millington Evening Standard (4), 2 March 2016*

And in a way, the character of Dorinda, a good-hearted shepherdess who harbors an unrequited love for Medoro, is the heart of "Orlando," especially here, with the appealing, warm-voiced soprano Carolyn Sampson in the role.

Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 14 March 2016

Carolyn Sampson brought out the more love-sick elements of the role, singing with her familiar blend of beauty of tone and highly communicative sympathy.

Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill, 2 March 2016

HANDEL Messiah, Britten Sinfonia, Eamonn Dougan

Carolyn Sampson's name alone is a guarantee of excellence and she was on seraphic form: radiant in her recitatives, meltingly affecting in her exquisitely judged takeover from Iestyn Davies midway through 'He shall feed his flock'. And, most magically of all, after 'Hallelujah' the balm and beauty of her near-sensuous legato in 'I know that my redeemer liveth' seemed to cleanse the tainted air.

Mark Valencia, Classical Source, 15 December 2015

Recital with Joseph Middleton, Leeds Lieder's Day of Song

She was stunning. [...]Sampson is well-known for her excellent, just about faultless treatment of Baroque pieces [...] There were no downturns. She dealt with Schumann's Meine Rose and his Röslein with obvious delight, and brought Quilter's brief Damask Roses brilliantly to life. One of her main strengths, well known on concert and opera stages across the globe, is her ability to absolutely live the part, and this she did yet again.

Richard Wilcocks, BachTrack, 26 April 2015

FLEURS (debut recital disc), BIS Records, with Joseph Middleton

Those of us who rejoice in the crystalline beauty of Carolyn Sampson's interpretations of Bach, Handel and Purcell will welcome this bouquet of songs on a floral theme, her debut recital disc. [...]With pianist Joseph Middleton she savours some choice blooms from, among others, Britten, Chabrier, Schubert, Schumann, Gounod and Strauss, her glorious soprano particularly affecting in Fauré's Le papillon et la fleur and the wonderfully perfumed Les roses d'Ispahan

Stephen Pritchard, The Guardian, 29 March 2015

Perfect for all who love Sampson's fragrant, light-filled, warmly communicative soprano [...] Sampson's soprano luxuriates in the melismas of Purcell's cool

evening breeze, inhabits the passions of Britten's Pushkin setting, *The Nightingale and the Rose*, and, refreshingly, refuses to over-indulge Faure's *Roses d'Ispahan*. Poulenc provides the disc's title-song and Sampson and Middleton capture its dark, chaste ecstasy as incomparably as they enjoy the exuberance of their final Cabrier *Toutes les fleurs*.

Hilary Finch BBC Music Magazine, May 2015

Sampson sails through the fast passage of Purcell with the same ease with which she luxuriates in the sunny, springtime start of Robert Schumann's "Meine Rose" (My rose). Even when sadness crosses her path, as it does in many songs on the program, the basic shine of her voice assures us that we will never linger there long.

Jason Victor Serinus, San Francisco Classical Voice, July 14, 2015

Carolyn Sampson's voice combines pinpoint purity with an engaging warmth and beauty that has put her at the forefront of sings in the Early Music world.

Robert Thicknesse, Opera Now, April 2015

BACH Ich habe genug, Bach Unwrapped, Kings Place London

beautifully portrayed by Sampson – the second recitative was fresh and bright...Here we felt the power of Sampson's dramatic capability...

Emily Owen, Bachtrack, February 2013

Recital with Matthew Wadsworth, Wigmore Hall London

The fresh, sappy soprano of Carolyn Sampson and the finely nuanced lute playing of Matthew Wadsworth...an always welcome double act...the dying fall of Sampson's vocal line, the long melismas that buried love, and the beautifully controlled ebb and flow of intensity within the word setting.

Hilary Finch, The Times, January 2013

HANDEL Julius Ceasar, The English Concert, Harry Bicket

The final treat was three arias from Handel's great operatic hit Julius Caesar...the theatrical vocal gestures, the vivid ornamentations, and the force of character were all there in Carolyn Sampson's dazzling performance.

The Bristol Post, October 2012

PURCELL The Fairy Queen, Glyndebourne Festival Opera

...Carolyn Sampson, whose voice and presence are always recognisable no matter what her disguise, provides three blissful moments of transcendence. The first with her paeon to sleep...the second her harvest to love...the third being a heart-stopping performance of 'O, let me weep'.

Edward Seckerson, The Independent, July 2012

MENDELSSOHN 'Lobegesang' Boston Symphony Orchestra and Bramwell Tovey,



Soprano Carolyn Sampson's silvery, flexible voice floated over the orchestra with power in reserve.

David Wright, Boston Classical Review, January 2012