



## Elizabeth Watts

### Soprano

#### **LIGETI *Le Grand Macabre*, London Symphony Orchestra, Sir Simon Rattle**

A uniformly strong cast included especially fine contributions from Peter Hoare as the inebriated Piet the Pot, Elizabeth Watts as Amanda, Heidi Melton as Mescalina and Pavlo Hunka as Nekrotzar, a suitably menacing harbinger of death. *Barry Millington, The Evening Standard, 16 January 2017*

An outstanding ensemble cast (and a very game LSO Chorus) did their best with what they were given; Audrey Luna's crazed Gepopo soared easily into Ligeti's musical stratosphere, Ronnita Miller and Elizabeth Watts clung and clutched musically at one another in a sequence of X-rated duets, *Alexandra Coghlan, The Independent, 16 January 2017*

There are splendid performances from Peter Hoare as drunken Piet the Pot, Elizabeth Watts as young lover Amanda and Heidi Melton as voracious Mescalina – all living for the day. *Clare Colvin, The Express, 22 January 2017*

*Clare Colvin, The Express, 22 January 2017*

... the scintillating Elizabeth Watts and Ronnita Miller duetted sensuously as the love couple, Amanda and Amando.

*Richard Fairman, The Financial Times, 18 January 2017*

...shortly after the start the pair Amando and Amanda (originally given more 'adult' names), sung by Ronnita Miller and Elizabeth Watts, give us a *Così*-like glimpse of illusory bliss.

*Michael Tanner, The Spectator, 21 January 2017*

The sopranos Ronnita Miller and Elizabeth Watts made a rhapsodic pair of world-forsaking lovers ...

*Paul Driver, The Times, 22 January 2017*

#### **COUPERIN *Leçons de Tenebres*, La Nuova Musica, Lucy Crowe. CD recording – Harmonia Mundi**

In the second lesson, Elizabeth Watts is grainier, softer-edged, earthier. When they [Watts and Lucy Crowe] sing together in the third lesson, the combination is breathtaking.

\*\*\*\* *Kate Molleson, The Guardian, 8 September 2016*

Elizabeth Watts takes centre stage in the second setting – her voice plummy and voluptuous ...

*Kate Bolton-Porciatti, BBC Music Magazine, December 2016*

#### **SULLIVAN *HMS Pinafore*, Scottish Opera, Richard Egarr. CD recording – Linn Records**

Elizabeth Watts' Josephine, with strong top notes and a pleasantly mischievous touch.

\*\*\*\* *Michael Scott Rohan, BBC Music Magazine, August 2016*

It was clearly one of those occasions where everyone plays off each other, and with a cast like this, the results are never less than engaging – whether it's the chorus, sighing in response to Elizabeth Watts' breathless 'I love you' as

Josephine in the Act 1 finale or the orchestra's delicious period-appropriate portamentos and Egarr's easy lilt as Hilary Summers' Buttercup lays out her wares. ....Watts gives Josephine's 'The hours creep apace' the full Donizetti treatment, to stellar effect.

*Richard Bratby, Gramophone, June 2016*

...the cast is a formidable assemblage of top UK talent. Elizabeth Watts as captain's daughter Josephine, a fuller vocal figure than the G&S norm, glides beautifully up to the top B flat at the end of her first aria.

*Graham Rogers, Opera, November 2016*

#### **MOZART The Marriage of Figaro & LANGER Figaro Gets a Divorce, Welsh National Opera**

Elizabeth Watts, once herself a delightful Susanna for WNO and now graduated to the Countess, displayed her maturing tone and insight into a wife's anguish at living with a pathological lecher.

*Rian Evans, The Guardian, 19 February 2016*

Elizabeth Watts excelled as the Countess in both operas, exuding despair and determination.

*Steph Power, The Independent, 22 February 2016*

... two impassioned arias, quite beautifully delivered by Elizabeth Watts.

*Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph, 22 February 2016*

Elizabeth Watts sings with a richness and sense of shade that nicely complements her more than usually impulsive portrayal of the Countess.

*Richard Bratby, The Spectator, 5 March 2016*

#### **ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI, Con Eco d'Amore: Arias, The English Concert, Laurence Cummings, Harmonia Mundi recording**

...this superb recital...her glowing timbre...and the brilliance of her coloratura in the virtuoso numbers thrills.

*Stephan Pettitt, Sunday Times, 4 October 2015*

Watts grabs every opportunity with a voice of perfect weight, pliancy and line, offering a solid middle balanced with an exciting top.

*Frances Muzzu, Opera Now, October 2015*

Elizabeth Watts has chosen to follow her lauded Bach and Mozart recitals...with an enterprising disc of arias by Scarlatti père. Very welcome it is too...clenched-teeth venom...assuaging warmth...delicate sensuality...ravishing pianissimo tone...the mingled grace, brilliance and expressive intensity of Watt's singing could hardly be bettered.

*Richard Wigmore, Gramophone, October 2015*

Elizabeth Watts has, for years, in tandem with her rapidly rising singing career, been researching these largely forgotten works.....

*Nick Coleman, The Independent, 10 October 2015*

A cracker of a programme...one of the most thrilling albums of its kind I've heard in recent years; I can't recommend this recording highly enough.

*Adrian Horsewood, Early Music Today, September-November 2015*

**MONTEVERDI *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr**

Elizabeth Watts as Minerva (and Amore) gave a strong performance, feisty and glowing right up to the top of her range...

*John Allison, Opera, December 2015*

...Elizabeth Watts' tremendously feisty and thrillingly well-sung Minerva...

*Andrew Clements, The Guardian, 30 September 2015*

Elizabeth Watts dominated as the goddess Minerva, cackling like *Father Ted's* Mrs Doyle and unleashing dazzling cannonades of coloratura.

*Anna Picard, The Times, 1 October 2015*

All roles were well taken, with Elizabeth Watts outstanding as Minerva and Amore.

*Barry Millington, London Evening Standard, 30 September 2015*

Roger Vignoles' 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert, Wigmore Hall

Roderick Williams and Elizabeth Watts excelled in a more light-hearted final section.

*Barry Millington, London Evening Standard, 13 July 2015*

**MOZART *Arias*, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Christian Baldini, Linn records**

The British lyric soprano Elizabeth Watts has rapidly ascended to the top rank of Mozartians internationally. Her gifts in this repertoire come across strongly here...a timbre atypically dark and rich for Susanna yet completely convincing...Phrasing is as elegant as one could wish...radiantly full-toned...finely executed *messa di voce*...a flawless *Batti, batti*...

*Roger Pines, Opera, November 2015.*

The glorious voice of Elizabeth Watts – now established as one of Britain's leading sopranos – more than justifies the purchase price. She reprises her seductive portrayal of Zerlina in the Royal Opera *Don Giovanni* with a touching *Vedrai, carino*, and moves us again with *Per pietà* from *Così fan tutte*.

*Stephen Pritchard, The Guardian, 28 June 2015*

*Batti, batti* and *Vedrai carino*, both sung here with a seductive tenderness...*Deh vieni non tardar*, too, Watts catches a specific quality of amorous yearning, shading to a dream of future bliss in the final bars...Since her debut disc of Schubert Lieder, Watts's lyric soprano has gradually ripened and deepened without losing its purity...mezzo warmth allied to secure, shining high notes...ideal *Fiordiligi*...mingled grace and unexaggerated fervour of her singing (*Servilia*).

*Richard Wigmore, Gramophone, July 2015*

Watts is a rising British talent in this repertoire...

*Hugh Canning, Sunday Times, 14 June 2016*

**COUPERIN *Leçons des ténèbres*, Spitalfields Festival**

Elizabeth Watts's wonderfully liquid unforced tone highlighted the best of Couperin's writing and the singer could bring aggression to the more psalmic passages.

*Jonathan McAloon, The Telegraph, 9 June 2015*

**BACH *St Matthew Passion*, Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr, AAM Records**

Elizabeth Watts's gleaming soprano...

*Hugh Canning, Sunday Times, 5 April 2015*

The outstanding Elizabeth Watts...

*Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Gramophone, June 2015*

**BACH *St Matthew Passion*, Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr, Barbican Hall, London**

Elizabeth Watts' wracked but radiant lode...

*Robert Thicknesse, Opera Now, May 2015*

..when soprano Elizabeth Watts sang of serpents gnawing at the human heart, we sensed real and sudden turmoil.

*Tim Ashley, The Guardian, 5 April 2015*

**HANDEL *Hercules*, The English Concert, Harry Bicket**

Elizabeth Watts confirmed her place as one of Britain's leading sopranos as the traduced lode, desolate in her lament for her lost home, but a match for Dejanira when accused of being Hercules's lover. Like a cornered lioness, eyes flashing, claws out, we felt her bitter scorn in *Ah, think what ills the jealous prove*. And yet, when Dejanira's downfall was complete, her honeyed sweetness in *My breast with tender pity swells* was deeply moving.

*Stephen Prichard, The Observer, 8 March 2015*

Elizabeth Watts...singing with appropriate and moving purity but unveiling fierce temperament – and pinpoint coloratura – when it was called for.

*Hugo Shirley, The Telegraph, 5 March 2015*

As the innocent lode, Elizabeth Watts's fresh and lucid soprano moved around Handel's notes with graceful expressiveness.

*George Hall, The Guardian, 5 March 2015*

**MOZART *Don Giovanni*, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Nicola Luisotti, DVD Malin Byström and Elizabeth Watts are very fine...**

*Richard Lawrence, Gramophone, December 2014*

Elizabeth Watts provides attractive tone and presence...

*Francis Muzzu, Opera Now, January 2015*

Zerlina (Elizabeth Watts in game form)...

*George Loomis, Opera, March 2015*

**HANDEL *Messiah*, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Richard Egarr**

...soprano Elizabeth Watts' voice was in glorious full bloom...

*Michael Tumelty, Herald Scotland, 1 December 2014*

**BACH *Mass in B Minor*, The English Concert, Harry Bicket**

Elizabeth Watts's airy, agile coloratura in the *Laudamus te* had a bejewelled, Italianate flavour...

*Alfred Hickling, The Guardian, 28 September 2014*

**BACH *St John Passion*, Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr, AAM recording**

...top drawer soloists...Elizabeth Watts's *Zerfliesse, mein Herze* is almost unbearably poignant...

*Paul Riley, BBC Music Magazine, April 2014*

...with impeccable soloists: James Gilchrist, Matthew Rose, Elizabeth Watts, Sarah Connolly...

*Hugh Canning, The Sunday Times, 20 April 2014*

...soloists with naturally expressive voices who can also inject telling interpretive details, such as Elizabeth Watts's quick reining-in of the phrase 'Mein Licht' at the end of *Ich folge* or impassioned surge of tone in the da capo of a heartbreaking *Zerfliesse*.

*Lindsay Kemp, Gramophone, April 2014*

Elizabeth Watts shapes her phrases beautifully, with a sure sense of direction...

*Simon Heighes, International Record Review, April 2014*

**CPE BACH *Magnificat*, Akademie für Alte Musik, Berlin, Hans-Christoph Rademann, Harmonia Mundi recording**

Elizabeth Watts's vibrant operatic soprano shines in *Quia respexit*...This is a glorious disc.

*Hugh Canning, The Sunday Times, 16, February 2014*

Elizabeth Watts is true and touching in *Quia respexit*..

*Richard Wigmore, Gramophone, August 2014*

**MOZART *Don Giovanni*, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Nicola Luisotti,**

Elizabeth Watts's spunky, flirty Zerlina added a much needed buffo element into a po-faced evening, her palpable desire to be seduced reflecting her keenness to get ahead in the world – the singing was delightfully bright and fresh, too.

*Hugo Shirley, Opera, April 2014*

Elizabeth Watts's Zerlina was exquisitely sung, elevating the character into a passionate, sexually aware creature who has clearly outgrown her provincial past.

*Ashutosh Khandekar, Opera Now, April 2014*

Best of all was Elizabeth Watts' Zerlina – perhaps the most purely captivating aspect of an invigorating if uneven evening.

*Rupert Christiansen, Daily Telegraph, 3 February 2014*

With the exceptions of Elizabeth Watts' bright-toned, serious Zerlina, and Alexander Tsymballuk's booming Commendatore, the vocal performances were not special.

*Hugh Canning, The Sunday Times, 10 February 2014*

The sparks come from Malin Byström's Anna and Elizabeth Watts' Zerlina...Watts turns *Batti, batti* into a song of seduction, claiming the entire audience as her conquest.

*Andrew Clark, Financial Times, 3 February 2014*

Elizabeth Watts sparkled in her debut as Zerlina.

*Fiona Maddocks, The Observer, 9 February 2014*

...Elizabeth Watts's lively, engaging Zerlina.

*Barry Millington, London Evening Standard, 3 February 2014*

Holten is lucky with his cast...Elizabeth Watts' perky Zerlina...

*George Hall, The Stage, 3 February 2014*

**HANDEL *Israel in Egypt*, Internationale Bachakademie Stuttgart, Hans-Christoph Rademann**

...die wunderbare Sopranistin Elizabeth Watts. *Singt zu dem Herrn*, forderte die Engländerin mit bezaubernd strahlender Stimme...

...the wonderful English soprano Elizabeth Watts. She was radiant in *Sing to the Lord*...

*Jürgen Kanold, Südwest Presse, 27 August 2013*

...und die strahlende Elizabeth Watts krönt ihre fulminante Sopranpartie mit einem hymnischen 'Sing Ye to the Lord'...

...and the radiant Elizabeth Watts crowned her brilliant performance with the anthem *Sing Ye to the Lord*...

*Dietholf Zerweck, Esslinger Zeitung, 27 August 2013*

**BRITTEN *Les Illuminations*, BRAHMS *German Requiem*, Jersey International Music Festival**

...Elizabeth Watts - one of my favourite feisty sopranos, who packs vocal punches with impeccably pure class.

*Michael White, The Telegraph, 14 May 2013*

**HANDEL *Radamisto*, The English Concert, Harry Bicket, Barbican Hall, London**

Elizabeth Watts outshone them both with her outstandingly communicative Tigrane, singing with bright conviction and conveying every emotional twist and turn with vivid clarity...showed how the repetitions in Handel's arias can be made to feel dramatically essential.

*Hugo Shirley, The Telegraph, 11 February 2013*

...the audience loved her for her gleaming singing as much as for her levity.

*Erica Jeal, The Guardian, 11 February 2013*

With David Daniels, Luca Pisaroni and Elizabeth Watts in leading roles, it's hard to imagine a better cast for Handel's drama.

*Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph, 9 February, 2013*

MOZART *Requiem*, London Symphony Orchestra, Yutaka Sado  
Elizabeth Watts' seamless but exquisitely nuanced legato...

*Barry Millington, London Evening Standard, 14 January 2013*

A fine group of soloists, led by Elizabeth Watts' affecting soprano...

*Martin Kettle, The Guardian, 15 January 2013*

**HANDEL *Messiah*, Academy of Ancient Music, Choir of King's College Cambridge, Stephen Cleobury**

When soprano Elizabeth Watts sang *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, she subtly emphasized "know" to make it a paean of soaring conviction.

*Norman Stinchcombe, The Birmingham Post, 21 December 2012*

**VIVALDI *Gloria, Dixit Dominus*, Academy of Ancient Music**

Highlights of the evening came from Elizabeth Watts, a feisty full-voiced soprano, whose *Introduction al Gloria: Ostro Picta* brimmed with sassy virtuosity.

*Kate Molleson, Herald Scotland, 10 December 2012*

**RICHARD STRAUSS *Complete Songs, Vol 6*, Roger Vignoles, Hyperion recording**

My pleasure in this latest volume is without any reservations. Elizabeth Watts sings gloriously, rising fluently to the high tessitura of Strauss's melodic lines (immediately obvious in the first few songs included in the recital). Her beautiful voice, sensitive phrasing and response to word-meanings are consistently rewarding and her partnership with Roger Vignoles could hardly be more beautifully balanced...

*Ivan March, Gramophone, February 2013*

Elizabeth Watts caused a sensation at the Wigmore Hall in 2010 when she replaced Dorothea Röschmann at the last minute...Now, she and Roger Vignoles have recorded the satirical *Krämerspiegel Op 66* cycle they performed to such acclaim that evening, plus a collection of single Strauss songs...Watts takes flight in this repertoire, her warm, generous soprano broadening into a luscious, creamy-toned wonder. Tonal glamour? You bet.

*Stephen Pritchard, The Observer, 21 October 2012*

**BRUCKNER *Requiem in D Min*, Northern Sinfonia, Thomas Zehermair**

...the opalescently toned soprano Elizabeth Watts...

*Alfred Hickling, The Guardian, 21 May 2012*

**MOZART *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Welsh National Opera, Wales Millennium Centre**

With Elizabeth Watts's Susanna we have top-notch singing, the peak scaled by her *Deh, vieni* in Act IV, beautifully phrased and coloured...no one else matches Watts's vocal lustre...

*Geoff Brown, The Times, 28 February 2012*

**HANDEL *Messiah*, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Festival Hall, London**

Elizabeth Watts was beguiling throughout, shaping her arias with real imagination & drama...

*Neil Fisher, The Times, 7 December 2011*

**HANDEL *Rinaldo*, Glyndebourne on Tour**

...Elizabeth Watts (Almirena) who had the sheer beauty of tone so necessary in this part.

*Roger Parker, Opera, December 2011*

**MOZART *Requiem*, Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Harry Christophers, Coro recording**

Elizabeth Watts is a luminous soprano. This recording comes within hailing distance of the best.

*George Hall, BBC Music, December 2011*

**KURTAG *Kafka Fragments*, Hebrides Ensemble with Alexander Janiczek**

Soprano Elizabeth Watts gave a formidable performance of unwavering control and directness...Between them, it is a profound and powerful achievement.

*Kate Molleson, The Guardian, 2 June 2011*

**MOZART *Requiem* Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, Harry Christophers**

Soprano Elizabeth Watts also stood out for the colour and finesse of her voice.

*David Weininger, The Boston Globe, 2 May 2011*

**BEETHOVEN *Fidelio*, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Sir Mark Elder**

Elizabeth Watts' Marzelline overcame her ironing routine and ridiculous chef's hat to produce a steady stream of beautiful phrasing, and she mustered the necessary vocal heft for the ensembles.

*Roger Parker, Opera, June 2011*

...Elizabeth Watts was a vivid and appealing Marzelline.

*Hugo Shirley, The Telegraph, 30 March 2011*

...Elizabeth Watts's Marzelline is unfailingly skillful.

*George Hall, The Guardian, 30 March 2011*

Elizabeth Watts sings Marzelline with a warm and free voice.

*Richard Fairman, The Financial Times, 31 March 2011*

...with Kurt Rydl and Elizabeth Watts perfectly embodying Rocco and Marzelline...

*Michael Church, The Independent, 30, March 2011*

**HANDEL *Messiah*, Huddersfield Choral Society, Northern Sinfonia, Jane Glover, Signum Classics recording.**

... the soprano Elizabeth Watts, particularly fine in *If God be for Us*.

*David Cairns, The Sunday Times, 10 April 2011*



**BACH *Cantatas and Arias*, The English Concert, Harry Bicket, Harmonia Mundi recording.**

...stunning...Watts does full justice to Bach's long-lined vocal writing with sensitive phrasing and she consistently sings with plush, luscious tone...Watts also possesses the rare and enviable ability to communicate emotion through the sound of her voice alone, a gift that makes her a particularly strong interpreter of this repertoire...highly recommended for lovers of Bach and beautiful singing.

*Derek Greten-Harrison, Opera News, June 2011*

I am now convinced that Watts is an authoritative and compelling Bach soprano as you will find anywhere today. This is without question singing supported by an alert artistry with a superb feel for musical line and an effortless delivery of Bach's long, sweeping phrases. You would have to look long and hard to find a more eloquent delivery of a Bach aria than this account of *Wie zittern und wankin' from Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht* and throughout *Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen*, Watts sings with wholly captivating brightness and vitality totally at ease with the idiom...some unforgettable moments of sublime music-making.

*Marc Rochester, International Record Review, 14 February 2011*

**MOZART *Mass in C Minor*, Leeds Festival Chorus, Northern Sinfonia**

...the powerful piece could have had no better ambassadors than the remarkable Elizabeth Watts and Sophie Bevan...a little glimpse of Constanze in the Salzburg night...

*Martin Hickes, The Guardian, 31 January 2011*

**THOMAS ARNE *Artaxerxes*, Classical Opera Company, Ian Page. Linn Records recording.**

...Mandane, a role that culminates in the virtuoso showpiece *The soldier tir'd*, here sung with dazzling accuracy and gleaming tone by Elizabeth Watts. Her voice is bigger than we're today accustomed to in this kind of work, but it's used throughout with great musicality.

*Brian Robins, Opera, May 2011*

...the more brilliant tone of Elizabeth Watts combines with her more vivid treatment of the words (try her first aria *Fly, soft ideas*) and the more forward recorded sound to make a stronger impression...Watts's triumphant upper notes, while the ruthless virtuosity of her *Monster away!* carries all before it.

*John Steane, Gramophone, April 2011*

...Elizabeth Watts and Rebecca Bottone shine under Ian Page's crisp direction.

*Nicholas Kenyon, The Observer, 23 January 2011*

**MOZART *The Magic Flute*, Welsh National Opera, Oxford**

Stars of this revival are Elizabeth Watts in glorious voice as Pamina, and conductor Gareth Jones, who captures all the light and shade in Mozart's score.

*Giles Woodforde, The Oxford Times, 8 December 2010*

**BACH Spitalfields Music Festival, 2010**

Things really caught fire with *Jauchzet*, however. Watts is a terrific communicator, her demeanor as engaging as her vocalism. Constantly varying

both her tone and her expression, she and Bennett threw off the semiquaver runs and top C's with dazzling aplomb. To cap it all, they offered as an encore Handel's *Eternal Source of Light Divine*, in which soprano and trumpet unfolded lines of ravishing beauty, immaculately controlled.

*Barry Millington, The Evening Standard, June 2010*

#### **Wigmore Hall, Recital, with Christopher Maltman and Roger Vignoles, June 2010**

Last minute substitutions for an absentee artist can, on occasion cause a sensation, and anyone who heard this recital, in which Elizabeth Watts replaced Dorothea Röschmann to join Christopher Maltman and Roger Vignoles for an all-Strauss programme, is unlikely to forget it. Watts, winner of the lieder prize at Cardiff Singer of the World, 2007, is already a major artist. But this struck me as marking a transition from a good singer into a great one, as well as allowing us to hear her in music she seems to have been born to sing. Watts has the right tonal glamour for Strauss, along with that tricky combination of vocal ease and immaculate control that this work requires. She also has a nice way with words, so that the suggestiveness of songs such as *Leises Lied* and *Wiegenlied* was ecstatically entwined with their hovering vocal lines.

*Tim Ashley, The Guardian*

#### **English Song Weekend, Ludlow, January 2010**

Elizabeth Watts gave an outstanding evening recital in St. Lawrence's Church accompanied by Ian Burnside. *I Sowed the Seeds of Love* moved from Gurney in Elizabethan mode to the mystic borderland with folksong inhabited by Rebecca Clarke and Vaughan Williams. Watts' lustrous soprano is able to meet every expressive demand made of it, from the impassioned fear of Purcell's *The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation* to her richly imagined re-creation of Elizabeth Maconchy's take on *Traherne* in *Sun, Moon and Stars*.

*Hilary Finch, The Times*

#### **BERLIOZ/MATTHEWS *Les Nuits d'été*, Wigmore Hall, City of London Sinfonia, March 2010**

Watts' performance of David Matthews' 2005 arrangement of Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été* was the centrepiece – and tour de force of the evening. The new slender orchestration is entirely faithful to the essence of Berlioz's sound world and Watts gave a performance that was outstanding in every way: in its beautifully idiomatic French and its long lines of melody whose legato arose as much from a continuity of thought and imagination as of vocal tone. The harsh, dark undertow of bass, cello, viola and horn in *Sur Les Lagunes* coloured Watts' own impressive low register. And rarely have I heard such an anguished yet perfectly focussed cry of 'Reviens' in *Absence*.

*Hilary Finch, The Times*

#### **BERLIOZ *Les Nuits d'été*, The Ulster Orchestra, Takuo Yuasa, January 2010**

How often do you hear a really satisfying account of all six songs? Rarely, it must be said. The songs make such severe and different demands that a single singer, even the finest, is hard put to master all of them. It can happen. In January I was in Belfast, where the cycle was sung by Elizabeth Watts...she gave one of the best performances I have ever heard...(she) had a strong vocal grasp of each song and an understanding of them remarkable in one so young.

David Cairns, *The Berlioz Society Bulletin*

**ARNE Artaxerxes, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, November 2009**

But the pick of the bunch is Elizabeth Watts who musters buckets of passion and thrilling coloratura as Xerxes' anguished daughter Mandane.

Richard Morrison, *The Times*

The showiest numbers are shared between the cruelly duped Arbaces...and our own rising star Elizabeth Watts as Mandane, whose ear-popping pyrotechnics run the gamut of emotion as capricious as her personality.

Edward Seckerson, *The Independent*

The Royal Opera has assembled a very decent cast, from which Elizabeth Watts' dazzling Mandane – brilliant in her famous solos *Fly, soft ideas, fly* and *The soldier tir'd* – stands out. Hers is the most vividly drawn character, and she grasps her histrionic opportunities greedily, steaming with indignant rage.

Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times*

There is some terrific singing to be heard here, especially from Elizabeth Watts, rising intrepidly to the coloratura challenges of the role of Mandane.

Barry Millington, *The Evening Standard*

**BRAHMS Requiem, Royal Festival Hall, London, RPO, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, April 2009**

(Available as live recording)

After the interval came Brahms' German Requiem. It's fashionable to argue that the piece works best done swiftly and small-scale. This, however was big, slow and overwhelming. The choral singing was wonderfully intense, and soloists Elizabeth Watts and Stéphane Degout were both outstanding. The long silence at its close, which no one dared to fracture with applause, was testament to its impact.

Tim Ashley, *The Guardian*

**SCHUBERT Lieder, RCA Red Seal Recording**

Rising star Elizabeth Watts makes her recording debut with this collection of 20 Schubert songs and immediately makes plain why she is one of today's most talked about young sopranos. Her beautiful, honey-toned voice, perfect intonation and innate understanding of this repertoire make this a stand-out CD. She charms with the moonlight of *An den Mond*, glows with the sunset of *Im Abendrot* and breaks our hearts with the sadness of *Lambertine*. Roger Vignoles has been playing these songs for years, yet sounds as fresh as his young companion, who must surely have a glittering career ahead.

Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer*

Among younger-generation English sopranos Watts stands out for her milky timbre and interpretative maturity, showcased by this totally charming recital. Accompanied by Roger Vignoles, she creates a sense of poignancy in each of these 21 songs without lading on the emotion. There's a glowing *In Abendrot*, a spirited *Die Forelle* and an aching pretty *Nacht und Träume*.

Andrew Clark, *The Financial Times*

Soprano Elizabeth Watts represented her country in the 2007 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, where she won the coveted Rosenblatt Recital Song Prize. A former Ferrier Prize-winner, she's also a BBC 'New Generation Artist' – a singer clearly on the rise. Watts' debut solo disc of Schubert songs mixes the super-familiar with the fairly familiar and the virtually forgotten...The disc's great strength is the voice itself, certainly one of the more beautiful that Britain has produced in a generation. Listen to *Im Abendrot* and you'll hear real bloom in the sound, a lyric soprano as ravishing as one could possibly want in this repertoire.  
*International Record Review*

Having won the Rosenblatt Song Prize, the Kathleen Ferrier Prize and two 2007 Young Artist of the Year prizes, Elizabeth Watts is clearly one of the brightest new talents. For her recording debut she's chosen a selection of Schubert Lieder, from crowd-pleasers such as *Night and Dreams* to the darker tones of Schiller's *Wallenstein Trilogy*. The verses set by Schubert are very of their time, focusing on the allegorical pantheism favoured in German Romanticism of the period: at times, it's like listening to the musical equivalent of a windswept Caspar David Friedrich landscape, with the singer gazing out over some emotional abyss. Watts treats the material with care and restraint, her measured delivery conveying an appealing elegance, particularly in love songs such as the exquisite nocturne *Nearness of the Beloved*. She's greatly aided by pianist Roger Vignoles, matching her playful delivery of *The Trout* with frolicsome flourishes as the fish splashes in the brook.  
*Andy Gill, The Independent*

Elizabeth Watts' youthful lyric soprano will already be familiar to many listeners through her personable appearances in the 2007 Cardiff Singer of the World competition. Schubert was a wise choice for a debut recital, the songs are carefully programmed and Watts' youthful radiant delivery with no flaws in technique that I can hear, fits many of the lieder like a glove...*An den Mond* makes a fine, introspective start; focused youthful exuberance freshens up *Die Forelle* and innocence charms in *Nachtviolen*. A few lines like the soaring in *Liane* certainly stand out, and a darker tone-colour briefly makes its mark in *Des Madchens Klage* (time and again I hear Mozart's Pamina, an ideal role for Watts at this stage.)  
*David Nice, BBC Music Magazine*

#### **GRAMOPHONE EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Hailed as a singer to watch after winning the 2006 Kathleen Ferrier Award and the 2007 Cardiff Song Prize, Elizabeth Watts makes her CD debut with this refreshingly unhackneyed Schubert programme. Perennial soprano favourites – *Die Forelle*, *Nacht und Träume*, *Frühlingsglaube*, *Suleika* – are not shunned. But Watts has alighted on some rarely aired gems. How often in recital do we hear the agitated scena-in-miniature *Aus Diego Manzanares*; or the playfully charming paean to spring *Die Blumensprache*; or the Novalis setting *Marie*, where sacred and profane blur in a song of exquisite rarefied grace?

A voice in its first, radiant freshness is always to be cherished in Schubert. Watts is a thoughtful interpreter, too, alive to the mood and atmosphere, colouring her

tone in response to a darkening of the harmony in, say *Sei mir gegrüsst*. Crucially, she also brings a measure of innocence and simplicity – not quite the same thing as artlessness – to many of these songs, allied to a technical mastery that allows her to spin a rapt, unblemished line in *Nacht und Träume*. Encouraged by Vignoles' buoyant accompaniment, she makes an engaging story-teller in *Die Forelle*, with an unexaggerated touch of indignation at the angler's treachery; and she sings the mildly salacious refrain song *Die Männer sind méchant* with just the right wide-eyed mock-pathos.

*Richard Wigmore, Gramophone*

The winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Award in 2006 and the Cardiff Singer of the World Song Prize in 2007, Watts is the new soprano to hear. She proves herself an ideal lieder singer in this Schubert disc with her bright tone, infallible tuning, clear German diction, innate lover's sadness and ability to portray a scene and tell a story simply and vividly. The silver glint in her voice matches the shrouded moonlight in *An den Mond*, as well as the nightingale in *An die Nachtigall*. She has a strong sense of partnership with her pianist Roger Vignoles, who gurgles playfully in *Die Forelle*, while she, at first charmed, registers bitter disappointment when the trout is captured.

*Rick Jones, The Times*

Having selected a Schubert album for her debut on RCA Red Seal, Elizabeth Watts shows her taste and audacity in her choice of repertoire. We are especially delighted...Roger Vignoles, as always, is a meticulous, communicating accompanist.

(Translated from the original German)

*Pizzicato*