

## Elizabeth Atherton, Lyric Soprano

Elizabeth Atherton is one of Britain's leading sopranos, equally at home on the opera stage or concert platform. Well known for her ability to inhabit a role, Atherton's versatility is such that her repertoire extends from Monteverdi, Handel and Mozart, collaborating with conductors such as Harry Christophers, Laurence Cummings and Paul McCreesh, through to Verdi, Debussy and Britten, working alongside Pierre Boulez, Richard Farnes, Vladimir Jurowski, Sir Charles Mackerras and Carlo Rizzi. Atherton's musical intelligence has meant that she is also at the forefront of contemporary music, having forged a close relationship with Sir Harrison Birtwistle, who wrote the leading roles of Eurydice and Medea for her in his chamber operas *The Corridor* and *The Cure*, and regularly premièring new works with conductors such as Thomas Adès, Martyn Brabbins and Thierry Fischer.

In recent years, Elizabeth has given the world premières of works by composers including Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Mark Bowden, Martin Butler, Francisco Coll, Simon Holt and Edward Rushton. She has recorded on the NMC label, including works by Alison Bauld, Diana Burrell and Nicola Lefanu and performs frequently with the London Sinfonietta.

In terms of 'fach', Elizabeth is very much a lyric soprano whose operatic roles include several of Mozart's heroines (Countess, Pamina, Fiordiligi, Ilia, Donna Elvira); Britten's Helena, Female Chorus and Governess; Handel's Merab, Alcina and Melissa; and Bizet's Micaela. She is not a soprano who enjoys spending very long at the extremes of her range, and although she is able to sing from a bottom A3 to a top C6, prefers to visit those regions only briefly before returning to more comfortable territory between about D4 and G5.

As a lyric soprano, Elizabeth is happiest when singing lyrical and melismatic music rather than constantly syllabic writing which takes its toll on the voice (in particular she is not comfortable with very wordy writing above the staff). The sound worlds of contemporary composers that she has most easily inhabited in recent times include those of Julian Anderson, Judith Bingham, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Pierre Boulez and Henri Dutilleux, all of whom incorporate an understanding of the human voice into their writing and enable the singer to sing lyrically whilst also having moments of more dramatic and angular scope. Elizabeth does not have perfect pitch, so when learning a score constantly has to find references and cues in order to pitch entries and learn melodically challenging lines – she always appreciates it if a composer has this in mind when writing!

To find out more about Elizabeth and hear/see clips of her singing, visit:

[www.elizabethathertonsoprano.com](http://www.elizabethathertonsoprano.com)

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