

# pressquotes

## **BENEDICT NELSON – BARITONE**

### **Britten *Canticles* / [CD: Signum]**

“Baritone Benedict Nelson gives substance to *The Journey of the Magi*, with perfect blend and balance.”

Hilary Finch, *BBC Music Magazine*, July 2013

### **Britten *The Canticles* / Linbury Studio Theatre**

“[Davies] and Bostridge were joined by Benedict Nelson – rich and warm of tone – in ‘The Journey of the Magi’, the first of two T. S. Eliot settings that drew the composer back to his Cantic form towards the end of his life after a seventeen-year gap.”

*Classical Source*, July 2013

“Britten’s pieces are performed with distinction by such leading singers as Ian Bostridge, Iestyn Davies and Benedict Nelson...”

*The Stage*, July 2013

### **Algeron *The Importance of Being Earnest* / Linbury Studio Theatre, ROH**

#### **Dir. Ramin Gray**

“Benedict Nelson [was] assured and personable as Algy.”

*Daily Telegraph*, June 2013

### **Britten *The Canticles* / BBC Recordings CD**

“The supporting performers are well chosen.... Benedict Nelson blends well [in Cantic IV].”

Richard Fairman, *Gramophone Magazine*, May 2013

### **Wigmore Hall Recital with Sophie Bevan / acc. Malcolm Martineau**

“Benedict Nelson, a hugely talented baritone with a smoothly elegant mahogany timbre, complemented by an intense and reflective musicality.

...he feels the music deeply and wants to honour it. His breath control is immaculate, his sense of phrase imaginative, his stage presence handsome and unaffected.

Gurney’s two corbies and Britten’s painting of Blake’s visions of the tyger and the fly were vividly and powerfully realised.”

Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph*, March 2013

### **Figaro in Rossini *The Barber of Seville* / English National Opera**

#### **cond. Jaime Martin / original dir. Jonathan Miller**

“Benedict Nelson was the Figaro...he sang and acted with considerable elegance. What a beautiful voice he has, and how intelligently musical he is: in the right circumstances, he could prove the successor to Gerald Finley.

Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph*, February 2013

“Benedict Nelson’s Barber is a lively presence... an enjoyable revival ...”

Hugh Canning, *Sunday Times*, March 2013

“Benedict Nelson’s rich baritone is suited to Figaro”

Clare Colvin, *Express.co.uk*, March 2013

### **Evangelist/Watchful/First Shepherd in Vaughan Williams *The Pilgrim’s Progress***

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**English National Opera / cond. Martyn Brabbins / dir. Yoshi Oida**

"Benedict Nelson enhances his growing reputation with a splendid performance as Evangelist and he was very impressive also in Watchful's nocturne".

John Quinn, *Seen and Heard International*, November 2012

"English National Opera is presenting the first full professional staging of this work since its première over 60 years ago, and a rapt audience hailed it as a quiet triumph. [...] Several of ENO's brightest young hopes – Benedict Nelson and Kitty Whately among them – complement expert old-timers".

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*, November 2012

"Benedict Nelson was firm-voiced, a smooth legato in evidence as Watchful, the porter, 'Into Thy hands, O Lord' beautifully delivered. His umbrella-wielding Evangelist, a most English man, was a pleasing portrayal as well, giving Pilgrim direction".

Mark Pullinger, *Opera Britannia*, November 2012

"Though many singers took on several roles, a large ensemble filled the stage. Here are some who shone, rising stars and veterans alike: Benedict Nelson, [...] Kitty Whately [...]".

Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian*, November 2012

"The most vivid stage presence is Benedict Nelson as the Evangelist, possessed of a fine voice and commanding presence".

Michael Tanner, *The Spectator*, November 2012

"Benedict Nelson, another young baritone, sang the Evangelist with conviction and solemnity".

« Un autre jeune baryton, Benedict Nelson, chantait l'Évangéliste (l'autre rôle de premier plan) avec conviction et solennité ».

Charles Pitt, *ConcertClassic.com*, December 2012

"Benedict Nelson proving an impressive Evangelist... Nelson's singing as Watchful, the night porter, in House Beautiful is also one of the evening's highlights".

Sam Smith, *The Londonist*, November 2012

"Benedict Nelson is an outstanding evangelist".

Antony Craig, *Gramophone*, November 2012

**Leeds Lieder & Europe-America Song Recital / Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall  
acc. Gary Matthewman**

"Benedict Nelson, with Gary Matthewman at the piano, was as compelling in the Heine and Schumann Lieder as he was in Roger Quilter's settings of Shakespeare songs. He was a commanding presence in "Ich grolle nicht", giving us a precisely-controlled tempest".

Richard Wilcocks, *bachtrack.com*, October 2012

**Song Recital / Cheltenham Festival / acc. Joseph Middleton**

"His rich full baritone voice made much of Vaughan Williams, Quilter and Purcell..."

Anne Dunn, *Gloucestershire Echo*, July 2012

**Death in Holst Savitri / Cheltenham Festival**

"As Death Benedict Nelson's rich bass voice inspired terror at first as he announced his approach, but his stern intent softened as the frail Sarah Connolly appealed to his better nature... truthfulness and sensitivity of the performers."

Roger Jones, *Gloucestershire Echo*, July 2012

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## **Title role in Britten *Billy Budd***

**English National Opera / cond. Edward Gardner / dir. David Alden**

"... impressive cast... The cast was headed by two admirable English singers. The baritone Benedict Nelson gave a fleshed-out and emotionally vulnerable performance of the tragic title character... Mr. Nelson captured Billy's boundless physical energy and decency while conveying the gullible nature that keeps Billy from seeing the malevolence of Claggart, the master-at-arms, until too late. Like many fine British singers before him, Mr. Nelson made the words matter... the honesty and directness of Mr. Nelson's singing won me over."

Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times*, June 2012

"The cast, which brings together many of the UK's finest male operatic performers on the same stage, is strikingly good... Benedict Nelson offers a candid, beautifully sung Billy Budd."

George Hall, *The Stage*, June 2012

"He looked good, acted well and sang his big act II solo beautifully..."

David Karlin, *Bachtrack*, June 2012

"Benedict Nelson's fresh-faced energy suits the role..."

Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer*, June 2012

"He sings ... movingly ... in his final solo..."

Mike Silverman, *Brandenton Herald*, June 2012

"There were some fine individual performances, especially in the title role by Benedict Nelson"

Paul Levy, *Arts Journal*, July 2012

"he brings real pathos to his final scene.

Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*, June 2012

His lonelier singing was truly musical and touching."

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*, June 2012

"The singing as always at the ENO was first rate... Benedict Nelson as Billy Budd possesses a beautiful voice... he was utterly compelling, his acting superb, his phrasing touching and he stole our hearts as the poor stammering scapegoat for a twisted homosexual obsession."

Melina Hughes, *Spear's WMS*, June 2012

"There were some beautiful moments to Benedict Nelson's coltish Billy, with the 'In the Darbies' aria a particular highlight... warm lyricism that was ... in evidence when the instrumentation fell away and Billy had the spotlight..."

Kimon Daltas, *Classical Music*, June 2012

"he brought an array of nuances to the opera's least complicated character... Far more affecting were the opera's intimate moments such as Billy's soliloquy as he awaits his execution – a scene he delivered with heartrending sensitivity."

Mark Valencia, *classicalsource.com*, June 2012

**Melot & Helmsmann in Wagner *Tristan und Isolde* / City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra  
Symphony Hall / cond. Andris Nelsons**

"Benedict Nelson's Melot had plenty of the dark arts"

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*Classical Source*, March 2012

“Benedict Nelson a le timbre parfait du traître, quel Melot ! Un mot de lui le rend coupable, vraie voix d’assassin.”

“Benedict had the perfect tone for a traitor – what a marvellous Melot! Just one word and he was guilty; this was the voice of a murderer.”

*Concertclassic.com*, March 2012

**Durufié *Requiem* / City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra  
Symphony Hall / cond. Simon Halsey**

“Benedict Nelson the fine baritone soloist”

David Hart, *Birmingham Post*, February 2012

**Joseph in Berlioz *L’enfance du Christ (The Childhood of Christ)* / Utah Symphony  
Abravanel Hall / cond. Thierry Fischer**

“Six superb soloists joined Fischer... Mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford and baritone Benedict Nelson were beautifully matched as Mary and Joseph”

Catherine Reese Newton, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, November 2011

**Britten: *Songs Volume 2* with Malcolm Martineau (piano) / Onyx 4079**

“But the revelation of the set is Benedict Nelson’s searingly powerful account of *Songs and Proverbs* of William Blake. This late cycle, dedicated to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, is dark and spare in tone without any of Britten’s customary twinkle. But when sung with the focused intensity that Nelson’s rich baritone brings to it, its impact is profoundly haunting.”

Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph*, November 2011

“...baritone Benedict Nelson is superly measured and thoughtful in the *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*”

Richard Fairman, *Gramophone*, January 2012

“Benedict Nelson’s stern baritone creates an austere response to the *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*”

Hilary Finch, *BBC Music Magazine*, January 2012

**London Song Festival Recital / St George’s Hanover Square / Nigel Foster (piano)**

“Nelson blazed with righteous Blakeian indignation at the Church, marriage and poverty, gripping us with Stanford’s setting of Keats’s haunting *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.”

Barry Millington, *Evening Standard*, November 2011

**Belcore in Donizetti *The Elixir of Love* / English National Opera / cond. Rory Macdonald /  
original dir. Jonathan Miller / revival dir. Elaine Tyler-Hall**

“Nelson’s baritone maintained its lyrical standpoint even when the character was at his most bold and brash.”

George Hall, *Opera*, November 2011

“Nelson plays Belcore as a glamorous bully boy who thinks he’s God’s gift. Miller’s relocation of the opera to the American midwest in the 1960s allows him to look like Elvis in *GI Blues*, though you sense a nasty temper beneath the mix of machismo and grace. It’s an immaculate characterisation.”

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Tim Ashley, *The Guardian*, September 2011

"Benedict Nelson and Johnson play off each other to nicely-judged effect...the duets and trios by this vocal triangle bowl very sweetly along."

Michael Church, *The Independent*, September 2011

"Nelson is perfect casting as the bumptious soldier and sings with vigour and panache."

George Hall, *The Stage*, September 2011

"Acting with style... Benedict Nelson has the swagger for Belcore."

*London Evening Standard*, September 2011

"Benedict Nelson, a singer new to the production, who fields Belcore's colloquialisms around 'knuckle sandwiches' and 'meatheads' with idiomatic nonchalance. As the G.I. who attempts to woo Adina ... Nelson certainly walks the walk. Last seen wearing a different kind of uniform – the school variety – in ENO's controversial *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he is a characterful baritone of real promise"

Mark Valencia, *WhatsOnStage*, September 2011

"Benedict Nelson sang with confident swagger as Belcore. Mr Nelson impressed me at the 2009 Wigmore Song competition so I was not surprised to see such rapid progress in his career."

Melaine Eskenazi, *musicOMH*, September 2011

"Belcore (Benedict Nelson) is a swaggering G.I.

Nelson's Belcore felt stronger, more lived-in vocally, and the balance of his charming Sergeant and Johnson's grumpily sincere Nemorino worked well."

Alexandra Coghlan, *The Arts Desk*, September 2011

## **Valentin in Gounod *Faust***

**English National Opera / cond. Edward Gardner / dir. Des McAnuff**

"...the hugely promising baritone Benedict Nelson was moving and eloquent in Valentin's death scene."

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*, September 2010

"Benedict Nelson hurls out Valentin's deathbed curse impressively"

Richard Morrison, *The Times*, September 2010

## **Opera: Highlights of 2009**

"Best newcomer: Benedict Nelson, potentially a baritone in the Finley and Keenlyside class"

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*, April 2010

## **Brahms *German Requiem***

**The Barbican / BBC Symphony Orchestra / cond. Jiri Belohlavek**

"Baritone Benedict Nelson struck the right, serious note. In all, the performance had a calm spaciousness, which went right to the music's ambiguous heart."

Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*, March 2010

## **Britten *Songs and Proverbs of William Blake***

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## **Kings Place / Malcolm Martineau (piano)**

"But it was Benedict Nelson's superbly rich baritone that stole the show. Songs and Proverbs of William Blake is marked by a darkness of mood and bleak mixture of yearning lyricism and uncanny incantation. Controlled and committed, Nelson produced a tour de force."

Guy Dammann, *The Guardian*, November 2009

"Then baritone Benedict Nelson tackled the hardest nut, *The Songs and Proverbs of William Blake*, not flinching from their intensity..."

Richard Fairman, *Financial Times*, November 2009

## **Wigmore Hall Song Competition**

"An Englishman with a voice warmer and more generous in amplitude than his predecessor, Benedict Nelson's singing went straight to the heart in his opening song by Quilter and he went on to win a more austere respect with two of Britten's Blake settings."

John Steane, *Opera Now*, November 2009

## **Ping in Puccini *Turandot***

### **English National Opera / cond. Edward Gardner / dir. Rupert Goold**

"The excellent Benedict Nelson (Ping)...stood out in supporting roles."

Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph*, October 2009

"The Ping however, Benedict Nelson, rescued them from disaster with his rich and vibrant baritone."

Antony Lias, *Opera Britannia*, October 2009

"Ping (an eloquent Benedict Nelson)"

Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian*, October 2009