

# pressquotes

## **GIDON SAKS – BASS BARITONE**

### **King Marke / *Tristan and Isolde* Festival de Opera de A Coruna**

“The Marke of Gidon Saks, low-Wagnerian singer left a pleasant memory for the audience, King Marke made a moving, very generous in voice and acting performance and it was one of the highlights of the evening.”

Julián Carrillo, *El Pais Galicia*, October 2013

### **Hermit *Der Freischütz*/ LSO Cond. Sir Colin Davis**

“Gidon Saks’s powerful Hermit... contribute[s] well...”

Mike Ashman, *Gramophone*, August 2013

“...the hermit (who steers the story to a happy conclusion) is sung with great presence by Gidon Saks...”

*Classical Source*, June 2013

### **Creon in Stravinsky *Oedipus Rex* / London Symphony Orchestra cond. Sir John Eliot Gardiner / Barbican Centre**

“...the great Gidon Saks, is of the highest caliber.”

Maxime Kaprielian, *Res Musica*, May 2013

“Gidon Saks was similarly bravura (vocally magnificent)”

Colin Anderson, *Classical Source*, April 2013

“Stuart Skelton (Oedipus), Gidon Saks (Creon), and Jennifer Johnston (Jocasta) made superb, larger-than-life protagonists...”

Michael Church, *Independent*, April 2013

“Gidon Saks, a luxury piece of casting for the one-aria role of Creon...”

Paul Kilbey, *Bach Track*, April 2013

### **Nick Shadow in Stravinsky *The Rake’s Progress* / Palais Garnier Opéra nationale de Paris / dir. Olivier Py / cond. Jeffrey Tate**

“The role of Nick Shadow was without doubt the best cast. Gidon Saks, with his rich and powerful voice, gave his character a certain charm and subtle irony, which despite everything, made the demon more likeable than the protagonist”.

« Le rôle de Nick Shadow est sans doute le plus réussi. Gidon Saks avec sa voix riche et puissante, imprime à son personnage un charme particulier et une ironie subtile au point que, malgré tout, le démon en devient plus sympathique que le protagoniste ».

Francesca Guerrasio, *ResMusica*, October 2012

“Gidon Saks, who was a magnificent Claggart in Francesca Zambello’s *Billy Budd*, was an almost likeable Nick Shadow, who was sometimes more terrifying than one of Tarentino’s sadists”.

« Gidon Saks (magnifique Claggart dans le *Billy Budd* de Francesca Zambello) compose un Nick Shadow presque sympathique, et parfois plus effrayant qu'un sadique de Tarentino ».

Jean-Laurent Poli, *Le Huffington Post*, October 2012

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"In this half-Faustian, half-Mephistophelian pairing, tenor Charles Castronovo and bass Gidon Saks make a fantastically sung duo, of an ideal laddish perversity. The show is worth seeing for them alone".

« Dans ce tandem mi-faustien, mi-méphistophélique, le ténor Charles Castronovo et la basse Gidon Saks forment un duo très en voix, d'une idéale et bonhomme perversité. Pour eux aussi, le spectacle s'impose ».

Gilles Macassar, *Télérama.fr*, October 2012

"Gidon Saks was a terrifying Claggart in *Billy Budd* in 2001 and 2010 at the Bastille, and he sang Gaspard in Berlioz' *Freischütz* at the Opéra-Comique, so he is used to devilish roles. Most admirable was the way in which he controlled his enormous voice in order to fit it into the corset with which Stravinsky said he had girthed his music".

« Terrifiant Claggart de Billy Budd en 2001 et 2010 à Bastille, Gidon Saks est habitué aux rôles diaboliques (il était Gaspard dans le Freischütz berliozien de l'Opéra-Comique), et on admire la manière dont il parvient à discipliner son énorme voix pour la plier à ce corset dans lequel Stravinsky disait avoir sanglé sa musique »

Laurent Bury, *Forum Opera*, October 2012

"The highlight of the show, and a real star in our opinion, was without doubt baritone Gidon Saks. He has taken Nick Shadow beyond the boundaries of the role. As a kind of Mephistopheles, he was the master of ceremonies and motor of the whole drama. Intent on hiding his true character, he had a very affected and artificial body language, which Saks portrayed without awkwardness or pathos, and which he integrated expertly into his brilliant characterisation. Saks is not only an inspired actor; his powerful yet controlled voice made an impression from the very beginning, with charm and brio. In the vaudeville duo with Tom in the second act (« My tale shall be told »), he showed himself to be a master of rhythm, and kept a delicate balance between force and expression. His descent to hell on losing the game of cards in the third act was a striking moment of diabolical rage, superbly imitated by the orchestra *con moto et molto agitato*".

« La vedette de la soirée, et véritable étoile à nos oreilles reste sans doute le baryton Gidon Saks. Son Nick Shadow a dépassé les préceptes du rôle. Sorte de Méphistophélès, il est le meneur de jeu et moteur du drame, et puisqu'il cache sa nature, il a un langage corporel extrêmement affecté et artificiel que Saks a assumé sans difficulté ni pathétique et a savamment intégré dans sa brillante interprétation. Non seulement génial acteur, il impose sa voix puissante mais apprivoisée depuis le début, et ce avec charme et brio. Dans le duo vaudevillesque avec Tom au deuxième acte (« My tale shall be told »), il se montre maître du rythme et dévoile un équilibre précieux de force et d'expression. Sa descente aux enfers suite à sa défaite au jeu de cartes au troisième acte, superbement imité par l'orchestre *con moto et molto agitato*, est un moment de rage diabolique frappant ».

Adrien De Vries, *Classique News*, October 2012

"In 2008, Laurent Naouri's Nick Shadow was one of gleaming, threatening darkness; Gidon Saks' portrayal was more sensitive in tone and likeable in manner: the former raced around like a whirlwind to attract his prey; whereas Saks played the life and soul of the party, only to make his subsequent assault all the more surprising. His characterisation was certainly of the same mind as Olivier Py's production which, under its ultra-sophisticated surface, didn't neglect the frankly comical side of the piece".

« En 2008, le Nick Shadow de Laurent Naouri était d'un noir rutilant, menaçant ; celui de Gidon Saks est plus ombrageux de timbre et sympathique d'abord : le premier vibronnait pour attirer sa

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proie, lui joue au boute-en-train pour mieux violenter ensuite. Il semble en tout cas ne faire qu'un avec la mise en scène d'Olivier Py qui, sous des dehors d'ultra-sophistication, n'oublie pas le comique franc de l'ouvrage ».

Chantal Cazaux, *Avant Scène Opéra*, October 2012

"Gidon Saks' Nick, the biting-toned diabolical orchestrator of his victim's rise and fall, crushed those he came in contact with with his very presence".

« Le Nick de Gidon Saks, orchestrateur diabolique, au timbre mordant, de l'ascension et de la chute de sa victime, écrase un peu tout le monde de sa présence ».

Libertine Py, *ConcertoNet.com*, October 2012

## **Nick Shadow *The Rake's Progress***

**Staatsoper Berlin / dir. Krzysztof Warlikowski / cond. Johannes Debus**

"Saks steals the limelight – his body as well as his voice are impenetrable, and his identification with the role is very impressive."

Andre Sokolowski, *Kultura Extra*, July 2012

## **Beethoven's Ninth Symphony / Royal Liverpool Philharmonic**

"...bass soloist Gidon Saks was particularly authoritative..."

Catherine Jones, *Liverpool Echo*, June 2012

"Gidon Saks was a powerful bass..."

Glyn Môn Hughes, *Classical Source*, June 2012

## **Recital with Roger Vignoles**

**Vocal Arts Society, Washington**

"He's a brilliant artist. He's a stage animal. He's naturally theatrical... he showed a mind-boggling range of styles, from full-bore operatic plumminess (in his opening Handel set) to idiomatic mastery of American musical genres (in a set of four songs by John Musto). He also has good looks, charisma and a rich voice that can buffet you with gravelly thunder but that he can also scale down to a wistful thread ...he showed that he can easily handle the upper register..."

Anne Midgette, *Washington Post*, June 2012

"Saks was at his best in a set of songs by Shostakovich... The poetry ... is matched to the music in an often sparing, bleak style, and the combination engaged the best side of Saks's imagination... brilliant text and unusual music brought out the best in Saks..."

Charles T. Downey, *IONarts*, May 2012

## **Hermit *Der Freischütz***

**LSO / cond. Sir Colin Davis**

"Gidon Saks brought the sort of authority to the Hermit."

Hugo Shirley, *Daily Telegraph*, April 2012

"...Gidon Saks in his all too brief moments as the hermit near the end – why didn't he step in as Kasper – engaged the audience in the drama of the moment through his commanding physical and vocal presence... the best... was certainly Gidon Saks."

Jim Pritchard, *Seen and Heard International*, April 2012

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## **Barbe-Bleue in Bartok *Bluebeard's Castle***

**Angers Nantes Opera / cond. Daniel Kawka / dir. Patrice Caurier and Moshe Leiser**

"Gidon Saks and Jeanne-Michèle Chardonnet are exactly the superstars required for this short hour of great violence."

*Le Figaro*, October 2011

"The two singers are magnificent: Jeanne-Michèle Chardonnet has the tender and naïve guilelessness of a sincere lover, and Gidon Saks the anxious force of a flushed out and hunted animal."

*ClassiqueNews.com*, October 2011

"The most memorable element in this production of 'Château de Barbe-Bleue' is the brilliant pairing of two completely committed artists, both from the original 2007 production: Gidon Saks in the role of Barbe-Bleue and Jeanne-Michèle Chardonnet in that of Judith. Whilst portraying Barbe-Bleue as disturbing and at times brutal, Saks nonetheless brought a deeply moving humanity and level of suffering to the character. Displaying a finely shaded tone, the Israeli bass was captivating with his dark toned vocal beauty and impressive power."

*ConcertoNet.com*, October 2011

## **Gaspard in Weber *Le Freischutz* (Berlioz's edition)**

**BBC Proms / Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique / cond. Sir John Eliot Gardiner**

"Gidon Saks's Gaspard (Caspar) was vivid and commanding. He dominated the Wolf's Glen scene, not hampered, by having to extract the magic bullets from the orifices of a writhing Agathe doubling as cauldron while he and Max straddled her."

Andrew Porter, *Opera*, November 2011

"Gidon Saks, summoning fiends from a cauldron under Sir Henry Wood's nose, revelled as the baddie."

Richard Morrison, *Times*, September 2011

"Gidon Saks as Gaspard had the most terrifically complex colouring to his high-lying bass voice that in itself had the ability to evoke a Heathcliffe-like richness of character, a meanness that was simultaneously irresistible."

Igor Toronyi-Lalic, *Arts Desk*, September 2011

## **Gaspard in Weber *Le Freischutz* (Berlioz's edition)**

**Opera Comique / cond. Sir John Eliot Gardiner / dir. Dan Jemmett**

"The singing was terrific, with Gidon Saks hair-raising as Gaspard."

Editor-in-Chief, *Gramophone*, January 2012

"With his powerful, sonorous bass voice, and his strong inner characterisation, Gidon Saks brought to life the evil Gaspard, ruined by Satan."

Bernhard Drobig, *Online Musik Magazine*, April 2011

"The singing was first rate too: Gidon Saks as the Mephistophelian Gaspard (aka Kaspar) was the real stand-out performance, his large, dark, perfectly steady bass voice easily filling the intimate space of the Opéra Comique."

James Jolly, *Gramophone*, April 2011

"Quant au Gaspard de Gidon Saks, on ne peut lui reprocher un quelconque manque de caractère. L'interprète est magnétique, rendant parfaitement le côté malsain du personnage, renforcé par la

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noirceur du timbre et le volume sonore impressionnant. Malheureusement il faut supporter en contrepartie une diction française incompréhensible et surtout une ligne de chant sans arrêt malmenée avec force aboiements (en particulier dans sa chanson à boire au premier acte, 'Dans la joie et les plaisirs' bien débraillée). Il s'apparie cependant bien avec le Samiel guttural de Christian Pelissier, petit personnage parfaitement inquiétant."

"As for Gidon Saks' Gaspard, one cannot accuse him of lack of depth in his characterisation. His interpretation is magnetic, rendering perfectly the character's unsound side, a rendering reinforced by the darkness of timbre and impressive sonorous volume [of his voice]."

Antoine Brunetto, *Forum Opera*, April 2011

"[Max] was crushed in every way by Gidon Saks, a terrifying Gaspard and a true Wagnerian, who gives the impression of having escaped from some tetralogy, mysterious and demonic yet always singing properly, and so impressive because of it that he almost jars with the general tone of the piece, the limits of which he represents."

Didier van Moere, *Concertonet.com*, April 2011

"Gidon Saks' vibrant Gaspard, whose bark-like projection seemed to confirm that he is indeed one of Satan's henchmen."

Marie-Aude Roux, *Le Monde*, April 2011

"One lays down ones arms before Gidon Saks' sonorous and biting Gaspard."

Jean-Charles Hoffelé, *Concert Classic*, April 2011

## **Nick Shadow in Stravinsky *The Rake's Progress***

**Staatsoper Berlin / cond. Ingo Metzmacher / dir. Krzysztof Warlikowski**

"The evening's real firecracker was the Israeli-born South African bass-baritone Gidon Saks as an extremely sleazy Nick Shadow, the opera's Méphistophélès. Saks, a New York City Opera veteran, refused to be hampered by a ridiculous wardrobe (courtesy of Claude Bardouil) that alternately brought to mind Andy Warhol, *Boogie Nights* and Roy Scheider in *All That Jazz*. Saks sang with perverse glee and an insistently snickering growl. It was such a full-bodied and physical performance (even in the seductive recitatives) one feared Saks might run out of steam. But he made all this sonic devilry seem natural and sang freely."

A.J. Goldmann, *Opera News*, December 2010

"Gidon Saks distinctive baritone and his poignant talent go hand in hand."

Offene Fragen, *Markische Allgemeine*, December 2010

## **Hagen in Wagner *Götterdämmerung* (concert performance)**

**Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia / cond. Victor Pablo Perez**

"Gidon Saks was exceptional: powerful voice, perfection in singing, tremendous projection, and absolutely engaging with dramatic expressions."

Julio Andrade Malden, *La Opinion Coruna*, October 2010

## **King Henry in Wagner *Lohengrin***

**City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / cond. Andris Nelsons**

"Gidon Saks was noble and authoritative as King Henry, but also full of compassion"

Rian Evans, *Opera Magazine*, June 2010

"...excellent bass...Gidon Saks as a properly regal Heinrich"

Rupert Christensen, *DailyTelegraph*, June 2010

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"...vocal elements rang out without confusion... Gidon Saks easily supplied gravitas as King Henry."  
Geoff Brown, *Times*, June 2010

"Gidon Saks was a commanding, sympathetic King Henry"  
Christopher Morley, *Birmingham Post*, June 2010

**Hagen in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* (concert performance)  
Washington National Opera / cond. Philippe Auguin**

"Gidon Saks sang with considerable dramatic force as Hagen."  
Tim Smith, *Opera Magazine*, April 2010

"Bass-baritone Gidon Saks' menacing Hagen was larger than life and highly convincing as the menacing psychopath who murders Siegfried and destroys a kingdom to get at the ring. His massive voice was never buried in Wagner's dense orchestral score, and his diction was crisp and precise."  
T.L.Ponick, *Washington Times*, November 2009

"...a cast of singers led, in order of excellence, by bass-baritone Gidon Saks as Hagen..."

Saks as Hagen creates perhaps the performance's most chilling visual image in Act 3 when, after mortally wounding Siegfried by stabbing him in the back with his spear, he runs to the opposite side of the stage and stands there, panting and holding his hand over his heart as if to say: "My God - I've really done it!"

His rich, black voice, especially potent in the upper part of his range, is ideally suited both to his brooding soliloquy in Act 1 and to his boisterous exchanges with the chorus of vassals in Act 2. Altogether, a superior performance."

*Associated Press*, November 2009

"as Hagen in a Washington National Opera concert performance of *Götterdämmerung*, where I hung on every word, and where, in his monologue at the end of the first scene of Act 1, Saks had so much watchful menace in his motionless body that he almost didn't have to sing."  
Greg Sandow, *The Arts Journal*, November 2009

**Hagen in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*  
Gran Teatro la Fenice / cond. Jeffrey Tate / dir. Robert Carsen & Patrick Kinmonth**

"Hagen was played by the powerful bass, Gidon Saks."  
*Gazzettino*, June 2009

"A vocal triumph for all the cast, but the optimum roles were that of Hagen – played by Gidon Saks, whose voice is profoundly dexterous and suited to the drama and the conflict between the powers - Waltraute and the three Norns."

*Il mattino, la tribuna, la Nuova*, June 2009

"The extremely expressive singers deserve our attention, among whom at least two must be mentioned here: Gidon Saks (Hagen) and Jayne Casselmann (Brunilde)."  
*Il Giornale*, July 2009

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"Gidon Saks's mephistophelian Hagen was excellent. He took full advantage of his impressive physicality to bestow the necessary negative charge on the character.' Saks's voice has huge volume... completely perfect for this role."

*Operclick*, June 2009

"The overpowering and evil Hagen was played by the booming Gidon Saks."

*Teatro.org*, June 2009

"The Israeli bass-baritone Gidon Saks gave a remarkable interpretation of Hagen, in both his acting and his singing."

*Asterisco Informazioni*, June 2009

## **Four Villains in Offenbach *Les contes d'Hoffmann***

**Royal Opera House / cond. Antonio Pappano / revival dir. Christopher Cowell (original production John Schlesinger)**

"Gidon Saks played the (four) villains with saturnine charisma."

Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph*, November 2008

## **Claggart in Britten *Billy Budd***

**London Symphony Orchestra & Chorus / cond. Daniel Harding  
Virgin Classics 5 19039 2**

"Gidon Saks catches the malevolence and cringing oiliness of the corrupt master-at-arms well."

Hugh Canning, *Sunday Times*, October 2008

"Gidon Saks, meanwhile, is wonderfully baleful and dark-voiced as Billy's nemesis, the evil Master-at-Arms John Claggart - a match for Hickox's John Tomlinson and Britten's Michael Langdon."

Matthew Rye, *Daily Telegraph*, September 2008

## **Claggart in Britten *Billy Budd***

**London Symphony Orchestra & Chorus / cond. Daniel Harding**

"It was Gidon Sak's Claggart that pushed this *Billy Budd* over the edge into greatness. It was an extraordinarily powerful, diseased creation, cavernous and black and completely inside the role. Sak's baleful presence defined the *Indomitable's* claustrophobia, and he went beyond portraying Claggart as merely a compulsive force of evil to reveal him as oddly powerless to stop himself from destroying Billy...It was a fantastic performance."

Peter Reed, *Opera Magazine*, January 2008

"Saks, disturbingly, almost balefully handsome, was like some Miltonic fallen angel bent on destroying the positivity of creation. A great, utterly convincing characterisation, this was arguably the finest performance of the role for some years."

Tim Ashley, *Guardian*, December 2007

"Rightly dominant was the Canadian giant Gidon Saks, barrel-chested and barrel-voiced as a sneering, brutally misanthropic Claggart."

Richard Morrisson, *Times*, December 2007

"Gidon Saks chilled one to the marrow with the malevolence of his stage persona, combined with a cavernous tone that irradiated evil - a tremendous performance."

Barry Millington, *Evening Standard*, December 2007

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"The revelation was Gidon Saks's Claggart, as definitive an impersonation of evil in word, tone and physical demeanour as I would wish to hear."

Andrew Clark, *Financial Times*, December 2007