

Critical acclaim for Britten's *Les Illuminations*

"Die kanadische Sopranistin Barbara Hannigan gab Luigi Nonos kurzes Solo «Djamila Boupachà» traumwandlerisch sicher und füllte den grossen Tonhallsaal selbst bei den leisesten Tönen bis in den letzten Winkel mit eindringlicher Emotion. Worauf sie Benjamin Brittens Rimbaud-Zyklus *Les illuminations* op. 18 für hohe Stimme und Streichorchester schlicht umwerfend gut sang. Welch differenzierte Farben! Wie genau hörte sie die Dynamik aus und stimmte sie auf den Orchesterklang ab! Ein Ereignis, das allerdings so nicht möglich gewesen wäre, hätte nicht Heras-Casado mit den Streichern des Tonhalle-Orchesters ausgezeichnet gearbeitet, ihnen die feinsten dynamischen Schattierungen entlockt, das Rhythmische entschlossen in die Hand genommen und das Werk mit einer fasslichen gestalterischen Vision aufgebaut."
Neues Züricher Zeitung 31 August 2010

"Then Barbara Hannigan waltzed in wearing a shimmering, cobalt blue satin gown, curtsied gracefully, her dress swirling around her like a water lily, and began to sing. Hannigan is an exception, one of the few heroes who prevent a lightning bolt from heaven from shattering the crumbling "classical music business": a singer blessed with an amazing soprano voice and full artistic incorruptibility, devoted with equal intensity to baroque and modern music. Glittering detours and the finest nuances characterised her performance of Britten; a single example must suffice to portray the finesse that she together with van Steen brought out as if transformed into all the shades of the shimmering string instruments of the Konzerthausorchester: at the line "Les sauvages dansent sans cesse la Fête de la Nuit", her voice so closely resembled the frenetic swirl of pizzicati and string instrument notes, it was as if all verbal thoughts and meanings dissolved into an excess of pure sound through "the savages dance ceaselessly the festival of the night". What a singer! Or to quote Rimbaud: "O Rumeurs et Visions!" - O Tumult and Visions!?"
Berliner Zeitung Dec 1, 2008
Britten's *Les Illuminations* with the Konzerthausorchester, Berlin

"Storgards relinquished his baton to shape the exquisite and resourceful string scoring of Britten's *Les Illuminations*, a work contemporaneous with the riches of the Frank Bridge *Variations*, also for string orchestra. Barbara Hannigan was the soprano soloist here, communicating Rimbaud's texts with convincing engagement, and delivering Britten's searching coloratura effects with triumphant panache."
Birmingham Post June 8, 2009
Britten's *Les Illuminations* with The CBSO, conducted by John Storgards

"The soloist in both works on this occasion was the elegant and accomplished Barbara Hannigan, the young Canadian soprano currently making a name for herself abroad, especially in England and Holland. Hannigan was lovely in both works, but particularly in the Britten with its vividly varied poetry. Here, her vocal clarity and security, her impeccable pitch, her strong sense of rhythm and her ability to recognize and fulfill the phrased arabesques of Britten's vocal line..."
Globe and Mail, Toronto, March 15, 2008
Britten's *Les Illuminations* and Mahler *4th Symphony*, with the Toronto Symphony, conducted by Peter Oundjian

"At the heart of the evening's program sat the crowning glory, recognized immediately by the reaction of the public: *Les Illuminations* for voice and string orchestra...the contribution of Barbara Hannigan was extraordinary, with her purest soprano voice in the upper register, able to follow Britten in all his adventurous panorama: the recitative-like tones, lyric lines reminiscent of Mussorgsky and Berlioz' *Nuits d'été*, the baroque moments of Purcell, the intimacy of Faure, the ambiguous sweetness of the future "Circle of life", leaving no emotional traces but of a true and proper theatrical part: it would be wonderful to someday find Hannigan in the lead role of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*."
La Stampa (November 2007)
Britten *Les Illuminations* with the RAI Orchestra of Torino conducted by John Storgards
Italy

"Canadian soprano Barbara Hannigan nearly walked away with the concert with her eloquently sensuous reading of the text. She sang with a plush sound, alluring languor and varied color, soaring with ecstasy in some poems and floating alluring pianissimos in others."
Detroit Free Press, March 15, 2008
Britten's *Les Illuminations* and Mahler *4th Symphony*, with the Toronto Symphony, conducted by Peter Oundjian

"Here, the evening's showpiece was a deliciously styled account of Mahler's Symphony No. 4 in G major. But no less a delight, and perhaps the more to treasure for its rarity, was a gorgeous performance of Britten's 1939 song-cycle "Les Illuminations" with Canadian soprano Barbara Hannigan in the solo role. Hannigan and the Toronto Symphony delivered the sum of poet and composer with consummate finesse. Applying a seemingly limitless vocal technique and an unfailing sense of color, Hannigan tapped to the core of Rimbaud's resonant language. Her words were clear, her musical textures as gauzy and seductive as sea-spray.

The (Mahler Fourth) symphony's otherworldly finale, a child's innocent ideal of heaven, once more brought Hannigan into the spotlight, and again she sang with a winning combination of technical aplomb, warmth and understanding.

Detroit News, March 15, 2008

Britten's *Les Illuminations* and Mahler *4th Symphony*, with the Toronto Symphony, conducted by Peter Oundjian