

## Elizabeth Weisberg – Soprano

The talented Elizabeth Weisberg's extraordinarily powerful soprano has filled St Martin-in-the-Fields in regular appearances since 2003 when she appeared for the first time at the church as a soloist in Mozart's *Requiem*. Her considered and emotional performances have consistently moved and enthralled audiences with patrons returning regularly to enjoy her progress as one of the great rising stars amongst London's vocal talent. Elizabeth recently appeared in the title role of Handel's *Theodora* in St Martin's *Handel 250 festival*. She also recently appeared as soprano soloist in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* in the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester with Nicholas Kraemer and the Manchester Camerata. Elizabeth's next performance at St Martin's will be for Haydn's *Creation* on Saturday 30 May.

**ITP:** Elizabeth, thank you so much for taking the time out of what is currently an extraordinarily busy schedule to answer our questions. Firstly, may we congratulate you on a wonderful performance in *Theodora*, it must have been an exciting opportunity to sing the title role in this superb, and rarely performed work.

**EW:** Thank you. It was very exciting indeed. I knew *Theodora* quite well as I sang in the chorus for a 7-concert tour around Europe, conducted by Emmanuelle Haim, a couple of years ago. This tour was dedicated to the memory of the glorious mezzo Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, who sang the role at Glyndebourne, and whose death was a tragic loss to the world of Baroque music. It is impossible not to think of her while performing this piece. On tour it was amazing to be onstage with Anne Sofie von Otter, whose interpretation of Irene's arias was simply stunning. Geraldine McGreevy sang 'Theodora', and I knew I wanted to perform the role too. It sits rather low for a soprano part, and as I have a strong lower register I thought I would be well suited to it.

**ITP:** You have also regularly performed the solo soprano role in Handel's better known *Messiah* here at St Martin's amongst several other key roles in the Baroque and Early Classical repertoire. Are these periods of particular interest to you as a singer?

**EW:** The Baroque period has always been of great interest to me, as my voice has always been suited to music of the era. I love singing coloratura and the music of Handel, Bach, Vivaldi and others feels natural for me to perform. Though my voice is changing and I am exploring more romantic repertoire, I think the baroque repertoire will always be a big part of my career.

**ITP:** We have enjoyed your performances of some roles a number of times and are constantly astounded at the variety, interest and depth with which you fill each interpretation. How do you prepare for a repeat performance and fill it with such originality?

**EW:** I suppose it helps that the audience in St Martin's is different every night, and I never know quite what to expect. I can rehearse the notes, the breathing, the phrasing etc but I never quite know how the performance is going to go until I step out into the church. There's a different energy in every performance that is created between the conductor, the orchestra, the audience, and me. The great thing about repeating repertoire is that I can really play around with interpretation each night, and because I feel so comfortable in St Martin's now I feel I can take risks. So, really all I can do in terms of preparation is to make sure I'm warmed up, hydrated, and feeling positive about the performance!

**ITP:** Do you have a favourite among the roles you have performed so successfully and if so, what makes it stand out from the others?

**EW:** The Handel *Gloria* is by far the most exciting work I perform in St Martin's. It is 15 minutes of incredible music, and there is so much variation within the piece. It has beautiful moments of repose and thrilling coloratura runs which go on forever. I think I have performed it about 15 times in St Martin's, and because I know it so well and the notes are physically in my body, I feel very confident singing it, and I think this is what makes it, in certain terms, my "party piece."

**ITP:** Do you ever get nervous before a solo appearance?

**EW:** Oh god yes! However, I have really improved my nerves over the years. Every performer suffers from some sort of performance phobia. I don't normally fret about my singing, but I don't like having to sit on stage for a long time before singing—it's sort of a claustrophobic feeling because I feel trapped on stage. I suppose I don't like feeling out of control. I've learned the best

way to overcome this is to lose myself in the music and concentrate on the efforts of my colleagues on stage. This makes the time pass more quickly before it's my turn to sing!

**ITP:** Who would you most like to sing alongside, and why?

**EW:** Oh goodness, there's not enough room on the page! Standing next to Anne-Sofie von Otter or Susan Gritton would be amazing as they are two of my favourite interpreters of baroque music. I was lucky enough to be standing next to James Gilchrist this Easter when we performed Bach St Matthew Passion together. He was evangelizing and I was singing the soprano solos. Years ago I never would have dreamed I'd be standing next to him!

**ITP:** Elizabeth, thank you so much again, before we let you get back to rehearsal, can you give us an idea of what is coming up next for you in 2009?

**EW:** I'm singing 'Galatea' in a concert performance of *Acis and Galatea* in Aldeburgh for Sir Charles MacKerras which I'm really excited about. I'll be doing a lot of auditions for opera companies, as I'd really like to gain more opera experience. I'll be touring with the Gabrielli Consort and the OAE, performing with various UK choral societies, and of course more concerts at St Martin's!

Don't miss Elizabeth's solo performance in Haydn's *Creation* on the closing night of St Martin's *Haydn at 200* festival.