



## Merlyn Quaife Soprano

West Australian Opera - *Seraglio*

"Like so many good Australian singers, Merlyn Quaife has been sparing with performances outside her native land, but on the evidence of her Constanze could have had a sparkling world career. The technical demands held no terrors for her: every note was in place and so – as great a challenge – was every word, even at the top. So much for one of the current myths about sopranos and words."

Rodney Milnes

Opera March 2004

A performer of great versatility, the distinguished soprano Merlyn Quaife has performed opera, oratorio, Lieder, chamber music and contemporary music to great acclaim throughout Australia and Europe. She has also performed as soloist with the Singapore Symphony and the Voronezh Philharmonic in Russia. Merlyn has appeared with all the State Opera Companies in roles ranging from the bel canto Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* to the minimalist Chiang Ch'ing in *Nixon in China*. She has performed with all the Symphony Australia orchestras, featured in repertoire of every conceivable style from Handel to Ligeti, as well as recording a number of CDs including *Aria for John Edward Eyre* by David Lumsdaine, which won her a Sounds Australia Award. She appears on Naxos, Move, Tall Poppies and ABC Classics labels.

In 1994, Merlyn made her American debut at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, singing the title role in Gordon Kerry's opera *Medea* with Chamber Made Opera. She also sang to great acclaim when she created the title role in Melbourne, with subsequent seasons in Sydney and Canberra with the same company. This was closely followed by a new production with the Berliner Kammeroper, which enjoyed three seasons.

Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine* (The Human Voice) has become a regular performance piece with orchestra or piano. Other major highlights have included Shostakovich *Symphony No. 14* with the Sydney Symphony (SSO), Britten *War Requiem* with the Berliner Capella and the First Flower Maiden in the acclaimed State Opera of South Australia (SOSA) production of *Parsifal* - the first fully staged Australian performance, under the baton of Jeffrey Tate. Merlyn has performed the Schoenberg *String Quartet No. 2* with the Arditti String Quartet for Melbourne International Festival of the Arts and the Goldner String Quartet for the Adelaide Festival. She also sang the role of Kitty Hart in the Australian premiere of *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie for the State Opera of South Australia.

Merlyn has had many works composed specifically for her and dedicated to her, with Gordon Kerry's *Kindled Skies* and Christopher Willcock's *Akmahtova Stanzas* being among the highlights.

*Lipizzaners with the Stars*, Australia wide, saw her combine her love of music with her passion for horses when she sang the fiendishly difficult Queen of the Night aria while riding. She has also been privileged to perform with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy in performances of Sibelius' *Luonnotar* and Rachmaninov's *The Bells*.

Education has also been an important part of Merlyn's career. Between 1995 and 2007 she was the Head of Department for Vocal Studies at the Faculty of Music at the University of Melbourne. Since 2005 she has also been guest teacher at the Lotte Lehmann Woche Summer School in Pereleberg, Germany and has been invited to teach and perform in Vienna and the USA.

Recent performances have included a Viennese program with Orchestra Victoria, Unsk Chin's *Akrostichon Wortspiel* (Acrostic Wordplay) and Dutilleux's *Correspondence* in Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Metropolis Series, Marianne in *Der Rosenkavalier* in concert with Hong Kong Philharmonic, Ortlinde in concert performances of *Die Walküre* with West Australian Symphony Orchestra, *Les Noces* and Haydn *Paukenmesse* for Auckland Philharmonia and appearing at the Totally Hugs New Music Festival in Perth and the Port Fairy Festival.

Merlyn's performances in 2009 will include a return to Auckland Philharmonia for Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and several performances at the new Melbourne Recital Centre, including at the inaugural concert in Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*, Bach arias with the Freshwater Trio, *Pierrot Lunaire* with Ensemble Liaison, Schoenberg *String Quartet No. 2* with the Arditti Quartet and 'Walk to the

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Field of Stars' – a concert in which Merlyn shares her experience of walking the Camino de Santiago in 2007 in words and song. She will also be Artist in Residence for West Australian Opera Company's Developing Artist Program.

For further information, please visit [www.merlynquaife.com](http://www.merlynquaife.com)

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