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Merlyn Quaife Soprano

Opera Australia – Bliss
“Just as dramatically and musically involving were Merlyn Quaife as the inflammatory Betty Joy...”
Michael Shmith, *The Age*, March 15, 2010

“Merlyn Quaife is strident and serpentine as Harry’s manipulative wife, Betty, making light work of Dean’s angular writing...”
Sarah Noble, *The Opera Critic*, 12 March 2010

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. Her recordings appear on the Naxos, Move, Tall Poppies and ABC Classics labels.

In 2010 Merlyn’s engagements include creating the role of Betty in Brett Dean’s new opera *Bliss* for Opera Australia in Sydney, Melbourne and at The Edinburgh Festival.

During 2009 Merlyn returned to Auckland Philharmonia for Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, and sang several performances at the new Melbourne Recital Centre including the inaugural concert of Vaughan Williams’ *Serenade to Music*, Bach arias with the Freshwater Trio and ‘Walk to the Field of Stars’ – a concert in which Merlyn shares her experience of walking the Camino de Santiago in 2007 in words and song. Merlyn also performed in the premiere of Brenton Broadstock’s *Tyranny of Distance* with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra at the Melbourne International Arts Festival and was Artist in Residence for West Australian Opera Company’s Developing Artist Program.

Other recent performances have included a Viennese program with Orchestra Victoria, Unsuk Chin’s *Akrostichon Wortspiel* 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 appearances at the Totally Huge New Music Festival in Perth and the Port Fairy Festival.

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

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, Britten *War Requiem* with the Berliner Capella and the First Flower Maiden in the acclaimed State Opera of South Australia 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 Arts Festival and the Goldner String Quartet for the Adelaide Festival, the role of Kitty Hart in the Australian premiere of *Dead Man Walking*

Merlyn Quaife’s Manager Worldwide is Judith Alexander: judith@artsmanagement.com.au
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by Jake Heggie for the State Opera of South Australia and Sibelius' *Luonnotar* and Rachmaninov's *The Bells* with the Sydney Symphony under the baton of Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Lipizzaners with the Stars, Australia wide, saw her combine her love of music with her passion for horses when she sang the Queen of the Night aria while riding.

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.

For further information, please visit www.merlynquaife.com

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