

PRESSQUOTES

Keel Watson

BASS-BARITONE

Aye / Akhnaten / English National Opera / 2019
Cond. Karen Kamensek / Dir. Phelim McDermott

"Keel Watson stands out vocally as an earthy and human Aye, who seems to have strayed into upper Egypt from a New Orleans mardi gras."

(The Guardian / Martin Kettle)

"In the role of the Pharaoh's advisors, Aye and Horemhab, Keel Watson and James Cleverton make their presence felt..."

(Classicalsource / Alexander Campbell)

"...ceremonial figures as a bishop (the High Priest of Amon), a colonial general (Horemhab) and a New Orleans Grand Marshall (Aye), all sung with suitable gravitas by, respectively, Colin Judson, James Cleverton and Keel Watson."

(Opera / Jonathan Cross)

"Keel Watson adds craggy warmth to the bottom of the ensemble as Aye, a foil to Colin Judson's ringing High Priest."

(The Arts Desk / Alexandra Coghlan)

King Philip II / Don Carlo / Fulham Opera / 2018
Cond. Benjamin Woodward / Dir. Lewis Reynolds

"Keel Watson's Philip was quite simply remarkable, a highly physical performance where Philip's martinet nature was embodied in every gesture. This was also highly detailed, and it was wonderful to watch the play of emotions on Watson's face as scenes played out, particularly intense encounters such as with Rodrigo in Act Two and the Grand Inquisitor in Act Four. But it was a musical performance too, and Watson even made us sympathise with the poor old man in his Act Four aria, though not for long as other emotions came into play too. It is too easy to play Philip simply as a caricature, and Watson's performance was so richly complex and truthful that we saw far more than that. It is certainly a performance which deserves to be seen on a bigger stage, and I would love to hear him sing the role in the original French."

(Planet Hugill / Robert Hugill)

"Formidable, but thin-skinned, Keel Watson makes her husband Filippo alarmingly believable, and his bass sounds splendid at full throttle."

(The Stage / Yehuda Shapiro)

The Usher / Trial by Jury / BBC Proms / 2018
Cond. Jane Glover / Dir. Jack Furness

"Keel Watson was in splendiferous voice as the fearsome Usher"

(The Stage / George Hall)

"Keel Watson revealed his bass-baritone to excellent effect in the role of the Usher..."

(MusicOMH / Sam Smith)

"...Keel Watson held together comings-and-goings with his warmly authoritative Usher."
(Classicalsource / Richard Whitehouse)

"Keel Watson ushered the BBC Singers into the courtroom with stentorian, punctilious and supercilious concern for the decorum and propriety of judicial process"
(Opera Today / Claire Seymour)

"...Keel Watson almost dominated proceedings as the Usher unable to keep order, with his wonderfully stentorian 'Silence in Court!'"
(Planet Hugill / Robert Hugill)

Scarpia / Toscatastrofhe! / Tête à Tête / 2018
Cond. Timothy Burke / Dir. Bill Bankes-Jones

"the splendid baritone of Keel Watson as the evil Scarpia."
(LondonTheatre1.com / Alan Fitter)

Dr Bartolo / The Marriage of Figaro / English National Opera / 2018
Cond. Martyn Brabbins / Dir. Fiona Shaw

"Keel Watson is an imposing Dr Bartolo"
(The Arts Desk / Jessica Duchen)

"There are class acts from Keel Watson as Doctor Bartolo and Janis Kelly as his housekeeper Marcellina..."
(The Express / Claire Colvin)

"... Keel Watson's bemused but beaming Doctor Bartolo, really did show how it's done..."
(Opera Today / Claire Seymour)

"Janis Kelly and Keel Watson made a fabulous double-act as Marcellina and Don Bartolo, both are fine comedians she with a range of physical gestures and he with a glorious selection of facial expressions."
(Planet Hugill)

"Janis Kelly and Keel Watson are class acts as Marcellina and Bartolo respectively..."
(MusicOMH / Sam Smith)

"Keel Watson is a wry and engaging Dr Bartolo"
(ClassicalSource / Alexander Campbell)

"...I especially look forward to more from the versatile and fruity bass of Keel Watson (Bartolo) - a fine acquisition for the company."
(Brian Dickie)

"Keel Watson... [as] Dr Bartolo delivered a nicely theatrical vengeance aria in Act I"
(Mark Ronan Theatre Reviews)

"Janis Kelly, Keel Watson, and Colin Judson respectively turn Marcellina, Doctor Bartolo, and Don Basilio into such vivid caricatures that in their scenes the comedy keeps fizzing."
(The Independent / Michael Church)

"Experience tells in the three character roles, sung by Janis Kelly, Keel Watson and Colin Judson."
(The Financial Times / Richard Fairman)

"The excellent bass-baritone Keel Watson"
(Le Lordinien)

"...Keel Watson gave a suitably magisterial Dr Bartolo"
(Bachtrack / Dominic Lowe)

"...there are entertaining moments aplenty, especially Janis Kelly and Keel Watson's Marcellina-Don Bartolo double act."
(The Times / Rebecca Franks)

"Doctor Bartolo is the wonderful Keel Watson. His role list is not that long, and one hopes to encounter him again, his stage presence is an absolute delight and his 'La vendetta' revealed a fully formed, burnished voice."
(Seen & Heard International / Colin Clarke)

King Sharyaati / Sukanya / Royal Opera & London Philharmonic Orchestra / 2017
Cond. David Murphy / Dir. Suba Das

"Bass-baritone Keel Watson was imposing and resonant as King Sharyaati..."
(Opera Today / Claire Seymour)

"Keel Watson, playing Sukanya's father King Sharyaati, also impressed with clear diction in his resonant bass-baritone voice."
(Bachtrack / Robert Gainer)

"What do you feel, my child?" asks the King, the splendidly orotund Keel Watson"
(The Telegraph / Ivan Hewett)

"...the cast was wholly committed throughout: Keel Watson, sonorous (if under-used) as King Sharyati..."
(Birmingham Post / Richard Bratby)

Second Man / Icarus / Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte, Montepulciano / 2016
Cond. Roland Böer / Dir. Keith Warner & Michael Barry

"Elliott Carlton Hines and Keel Watson gave excellent performances and made real characters of their roles, as First and Second Man respectively."
(Opera / Roberto del Nista)

"Il basso Keel Watson impersona il secondo sequestratore, "quello più silenzioso e brutale", al quale nella nona scena tocca un momento di grande intensità drammatica e canora che risolve con perizia e partecipazione."

"The bass Keel Watson plays the second kidnapper, "the most silent and brutal", who in the ninth scene sings with great intensity, drama and skill"
(Operaclick.com / Michelangelo Pecoraro)

Holländer / Der fliegende Holländer / Fulham Opera / 2015
Cond. Benjamin Woodward / Dir. Daisy Evans

"The utterly glorious magnificence of Keel Watson's passionate, doomed Dutchman would have graced a venue far larger than this. Larger than life in every way, with a voice so huge, bronze-toned and beautiful..."
(Wagner News / Katie Barnes)

"Keel Watson's magnificent, powerful, bronze-toned Dutchman keeps on delivering a glorious cocktail of pathos, distrust, and vulnerability right to the end."
(Bachtrack / Charlotte Valori)

Caterpillar / Alice's Adventures in Wonderland / Royal Opera House, Covent Garden / 2015
Cond. Matthew Waldren / Dir. Martin Duncan

"Best of all was Keel Watson's hookah-smoking Caterpillar. Dressed as a sultan he deserved to stop the show with his 'Wonderland Blues'"

(Seen & Heard International / Jim Pritchard)

Falstaff / Falstaff / Grimeborn / 2015
Cond. Benjamin Woodward / Dir. Daisy Evans

"Keel Watson was born to play Falstaff"

(Evening Standard / Nick Kimberley)

"Keel Watson is a natural for the role of Falstaff. He has a huge voice when needed, and a sly, twinkly, easeful manner of deceit that allows you to see the old rogue as both crook and charmer."

(British Theatre / Tim Hochstrasser)

Caterpillar / Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Signum Classics) / 2015
Cond. Matthew Waldren

"...by far the best – the Caterpillar's 'Wonderland Blues', which Keel Watson turns into a showpiece cameo"

(Gramophone / Richard Fairman)

"Keel Watson's splendid Caterpillar, going the full Muddy Waters in The Wonderland Blues"

(The Times / Neil Fisher)

"My favourite though must be the wonderful blues sung by Keel Watson's delightfully spaced-out caterpillar."

(Planet Hugill)

"There's a fabulously louche blues number for the Caterpillar (a hilarious Keel Watson)"

(Sinfini Music / Warwick Thompson)

Il Re / Aida / Opera Holland Park / 2015
Cond. Manlio Benzi / Dir. Daniel Slater

"Keel Watson brought his large voice to bear on the King to create a really larger than life musical personality."

(Opera Today / Robert Hugill)

"Keel Watson made an authoritative King of Egypt, his voice rich and imperious."

(Opera Britannia / John E. de Wald)

"Keel Watson's cigar-toting King was carried off with swagger."

(Bachtrack / Mark Pullinger)

"Keel Watson as the king made a weighty potentate with a strong voice."

(Mark Ronan theatre Reviews)

"Smaller roles such as Keel Watson's King of Egypt and Graeme Broadbent's High Priest Ramfis are both towers of strength."

(The Stage / George Hall)

"Keel Watson's cigar-chomping King and Jonathan Veira's Amonasro make their mark"

(The Times / Neil Fisher)

"Keel Watson's sturdily sung King of Egypt"
(Opera / Peter Reed)

"...Graeme Broadbent (Ramfis) and Keel Watson (The King) all made a strong vocal impression in their supporting roles."
(MusicOMH / Keith McDonnell)

Macbeth / Macbeth / English Pocket Opera at Central St Martin's / 2015
Cond. Philip Voldman / Dir. Paul Featherstone

"Watson was a relatively late addition to the cast, and was thrilling and mesmerising. Singing with lovely evenness of tone and a ringing top, with no sense of strain the bass-baritone really took control of the role..."
(Planet Hugill)

"Watson is a fine actor and used his voice most expressively, switching from fear and vulnerability to brutal defiance, and judging the pace and tenor of the role skilfully. His voice can be both nimble and sturdy, and he used it with intelligence and discretion"
(Opera Today / Claire Seymour)

"Keel Watson is a wonderfully reliable Verdian and he was a tense, brooding Macbeth always trying to internalise his emotions but never succeeding. He is physically imposing, prowled around menacingly and dominated proceedings with his darkly toned bass-baritone that swelled very impressively when intensely angry or in total despair."
(Seen & Heard International / Jim Pritchard)

Falstaff / Falstaff / Fulham Opera / 2014
Cond. Benjamin Woodward / Dir. Daisy Evans

"Leading the cast here was Keel Watson, whose Falstaff was as watchable as it was vocally commanding, a lived-in performance of tremendous appeal. Manic and mischievous rather than massive and blustering, his Sir John was alive with subtleties that passed all too swiftly in this fast-paced drama."
(Opera / Alexandra Coghlan)

"Keel Watson – like some of the great Falstaffs before him – finds a lyrical thread in some potentially choppy Verdian phrases. His sound is virile and exciting"
(Seen & Heard International / Jim Pritchard)

Oroveso / Norma / Opera Holland Park / 2014
Cond. Peter Robinson / Dir. Olivia Fuchs

"Keel Watson brought authority and pathos to Oroveso"
(Opera / Peter Reed)

"Keel Watson's darkly resonant voice made for a strongly characterised Oroveso. His was a performance which made you wish that Bellini had made the role stronger, but Watson's made every note count..."
(Planet Hugill)

"...strong vocal and stage presence from Keel Watson as the Druid leader Oroveso"
(Mark Ronan Theatre Reviews)

"...with his sturdy bass-baritone voice, he proves a highly engaging presence."
(MusciOMH / Sam Smith)

"Keel Watson took on the role of Oroveso and he did a good job rallying the townsfolk: he sang with full throated vocal authority."

(Seen & Heard International / Robert Beattie)

"Keel Watson's imposing Oroveso."

(The Spectator / Hugo Shirley)

Dosifey / Khovanschina / Birmingham Opera Company / 2014

Cond. Stuart Stratford / Dir. Graham Vick

"Keel Watson made an imposing and all-too-persuasive Dosifey, rolling out his noble phrases with plenty of rich, smooth timbre."

(Opera / Hugo Shirley)

"A crisply enunciating and vocally adequate cast is led by Claudia Huckle and Keel Watson..."

(The Telegraph / Rupert Christiansen)

"Best of all... Keel Watson as a bold messianic Dosifei"

(The Guardian / Andrew Clements)

"Keel Watson is the majestic Dosifei"

(The Financial Times / Andrew Clark)

"Outstanding in the team... Keel Watson as Dosifei, a born-again Patriarch"

(Birmingham Post / Christopher Morley)

"...the terrifying Dosifei, made all the more frightening by the power and size of Keel Watson, one of BOC's noblest stalwarts"

(The Spectator / Michael Tanner)

"Watson has power, stature, hypnotic intensity, modesty, and oozes mesmerising spiritual leadership"

(Exeunt / Roderic Dunnett)

Caterpillar / Alice's Adventures in Wonderland / Opera Holland Park / 2013

Cond. Stuart Stratford / Dir. Martin Duncan

"Keel Watson was a magnificent Caterpillar, moving with stately torpor and delivering another show-stopper with his 'Wonderland Blues'."

(Opera / Peter Reed)

"...the marvellous Keel Watson, whose "Wonderland Blues" are the highlight of the opera..."

(The Arts Desk / David Nice)

"There are star turns from Hanna Hipp (as a manic, menacing Mad Hatter) and Keel Watson (as the hookah-pipe smoking, basso profundo Caterpillar)."

(The Telegraph / John Allison)

"Keel Watson as a sumptuously languid caterpillar leading "The Wonderland Blues" in Louis Armstrong mode"

(WhatsOnStage / Susan Elkin)

"Keel Watson the vocally and physically grand Caterpillar"

(The Stage / George Hall)

"Perhaps the most memorable of all was Keel Watson's Caterpillar, who got to sing a most delightful blues."

(Planet Hugill)

"Particularly brilliant is the Wonderland Blues, a raspy jazz number sung by Keel Watson's Caterpillar in fruity bass tones and languorous sustains."

(The Upcoming / Alexandra Sims)

"There is a lovely 'Wonderland Blues' from Alice and a big green Caterpillar with an aching head (Keel Watson)."

(The Big Issue / Rosenna East)

**Nourabad / Les pêcheurs de perles / Opera Holland Park / 2013
Cond. Matthew Waldren / Dir. Oliver Platt**

"Bass Keel Watson's Nourabad makes a very credible high-priest"

(The Independent / Michael Church)

"...Keel Watson is strong and sturdy, both vocally and dramatically, as Nourabad"

(MusicOMH / Sam Smith)

"The role of Nourabad, the village elder, is relatively small but Keel Watson was physically impressive in the role, making it seem far more than it was and singing his solo passages with a nice suaveness."

(Planet Hugill)

"Keel Watson was an impressive Nourabad; not only did he sing the role flawlessly, but his physical presence and the idiosyncratic attributes he manifested were a fantastic touch of theatre."

(MusicalCriticism / Mike Migliore)

"Keel Watson's high priest Nourabad is a solid presence throughout"

(Time Out / Jason Best)

**Fiesco / Simon Boccanegra / English Touring Opera / 2013
Cond. Michael Rosewell / Dir. James Conway**

"vocally magnificent Keel Watson"

(The Arts Desk / Roderic Dunnett)

"Keel Watson is visually and vocally substantial as Fiesco"

(The Express / Claire Colvin)

"Keel Watson opposes him as a Fiesco of grandeur and depth, his rich bass superbly expressive"

(The Stage / George Hall)

"Craig Smith as Simon Boccanegra and Keel Watson as Fiesco get the performance off to a powerful beginning with some superbly shaped performances."

(WhatsOnStage)

"Keel Watson as Fiesco was in fine voice, both in his lamenting solo and his angry first confrontation with Boccanegra."

(EADT24 / Gareth Jones)

**Fasolt / Das Rheingold / Teatro Massimo, Palermo / 2013
Cond. Pietari Inkinen / Dir Graham Vick**

"Keel Watson's Fasolt is the truest Wagnerian voice and gives the most moving performance of the evening."

(The Financial Times / Shirley Apthorp)

"Keel Watson, inappuntabile sul piano tecnico e eccellente nel rappresentare lo stato di soggiogazione rispetto al fratello"

(GBOpera.it / Ilaria Grippaudo)

"Il basso Keel Watson (Fasolt) ha una voce vigorosamente wagneriana unita a una forte presenza scenica"

(OperaClick / Marco Crescimanno)

Commendatore / Don Giovanni / Mid Wales Opera / 2012

Cond. Nicholas Cleobury / Dir. Martin Lloyd-Evans

"...the pièce de résistance of the production is Keel Watson's Commendatore who becomes, not a statue, but a monster – one of the living dead – and whose shadow hangs over the action."

(Seen & Heard International / Roger Jones)

"Keel Watson is a powerful vengeful Commendatore"

(Theatre in Wales / Adam Somerset)

"...the Commendatore, who pops up with ghoulish regularity and is played with his customary largesse by Keel Watson."

(The Guardian / Rian Evans)

Raimondo / Lucia di Lammermoor / Opera Holland Park / 2012

Cond. Stuart Trafford / Dir. Olivia Fuchs

"Keel Watson sings the family chaplain, Raimondo, with sympathetic dignity"

(The Stage / George Hall)

"The bass Keel Watson impressed as the chaplain Raimondo, his musicality allied to a strong stage presence"

(Bachtrack / David Karlin)

"there were fine contributions from Aldo Di Toro as Edgardo, Aled Hall as Arturo and Keel Watson as a splendidly portentous chaplain, Raimondo."

(Evening Standard / Barry Millington)

"Watson is a big guy with a strong stage presence, combining the technique to sing Donizetti with a persona which can believably wrestle a gun from a man. His Raimondo was very vivid, far more of a participant than in other performances of the opera that I have seen."

(Planet Hugill)

"Keel Watson's majestically sung Raimondo"

(ClassicalSource / Peter Reed)

"Keel Watson's Raimondo being possessed of a dark, resonant bass instrument."

(MusicOMH / Sam Smith)

Zuniga / Carmen / Opera North / 2011

Cond. Alexander Ingram / Daniel Kramer

"Keel Watson's Zuniga is excellent"

(The Arts Desk / Graham Rickson)

"Zuniga played by Keel Watson gave a witty and powerful performance and his stage presence was always noticed."

(The Public Reviews / Laura Stimpson)

Iago / Othello / Birmingham Opera Company / 2009
Cond. Stephen Barlow / Dir. Graham Vick

"...Iago nearly stole the show, Keel Watson on volcanic form in what must surely be his finest performance to date..."

(Birmingham Post/ Richard Bratby)

"...Iago – the brilliant Keel Watson..."

(The Guardian / Rhian Evans)

"...Both (Samm and Watson) are BOC veterans, but nothing I have heard from them before quite prepared me for the impact of their performances here... Watson made every word "speak", and he is a fine actor, making you almost believe he is an "honest" Iago..."

(The Sunday Times / Hugh Canning)

"...Keel Watson's menacingly physical Iago..."

(The Times / Richard Morrison)

Water Spirit / Rusalka / English Touring Opera/ 2008
Cond. Alexander Ingram / Dir. James Conway

"Keel Watson gave an excellent performance of a key role. His bass baritone has plenty of character, and he sounded just as much at ease right at the top of the voice as in his darker depths. His tone is natural and open and his stage personality delightful. This was music drama as it should be."

(MusicalCriticism / Mike Reynolds)

"...strong performances from Fiona Kimm as the witch Jezibaba and Keel Watson as the world-weary Waterman"

(The Guardian / Anthony Holden)

"Keel Watson was a characterful Water Sprite, his full bass caressing the melancholy falling phrases."

(Opera Today / Ruth Elleson)

"Amongst the singers, Keel Watson and Donna Bateman were the best..."

(Seen & Heard International / Bill Kenny)

Soloist / Ca Ira (Roger Waters) / L'Auditorium Parco della Musica, Rome

"...John Relyea e Keel Watson (due baritoni molto espressivi)..."

(Il Messaggero / Alfredo Gasponi)

Fasolt / Das Rheingold / Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Lisbon / 2006
Cond. Aureliano Cattaneo / Dir. Graham Vick

"...The cast is young, committed and well-matched... Keel Watson's compelling Fasolt is flawlessly articulated..."

(The Financial Times / Shirley Apthorp)

Zuniga / Carmen / Mid Wales Opera / 2005
Cond. Keith Darlington

"...Keel Watson's Zuniga, a mountainous, black-voiced bully, is terrific..."

(David Blewitt / Opera)

Second Priest / The Magic Flute / Opera North / 2003
Dir. Tim Supple

"...Keel Watson and Ronald Samm are exceptional as his two leading priests..."
(The Guardian)

Kunrad / Feuersnot / Chelsea Opera Group / 2000
Cond. Adrian Brown

"...Keel Watson's firm resonant baritone was admirable in Kunrad's long address..."
(Opera)

Kurwenal / Tristan and Isolde / Camberwell Pocket Opera / 2000

"...This performance suggested that we might have got somewhere had the opera been renamed 'Brangaene and Kurwenal'. The singers of these roles were both worth hearing: Heather Fryer was alert and fresh as Brangaene and Keel Watson had real presence as Kurwenal..."
(Opera)

Balthazar / Amahl and the Night Visitors / Menotti / Dunedin Consort / 2000

"...Keel Watson as King Balthazar has a bass voice like melted chocolate and one suspects underneath his grand exterior, a heart of gold..."
(Evening News)

Charon / Orfeo (Monteverdi) / English National Opera / 1999
Dir. David Freeman

"...Keel Watson's memorable Charon makes his snail-like choices..."
(Evening Standard)

"...The rich bass tones of Keel Watson and Dean Robinson as Pluto keep up the good work..."
(What's On in London)

"...Keel Watson was a vocally assured Charon..."
(The Stage)

Tonio / I Pagliacci / Cavalleria Rusticana / Holland Park Opera / 1998

"...Keel Watson as Tonio helped put Holland Park Opera's Pagliacci in a totally different class from their Cavalleria. Watson (who won the American Express Holland Park award) has an extremely well-focused and powerful baritone. What sets him apart is his extraordinary charisma..."
(Opera Now)

"Keel Watson's dramatic baritone raised the curtain with a vividly declaimed Prologue and he succeeded in making the mal-formed Tonio sympathetic..."
(The Sunday Times)

"...and it went with a swing, right from Keel Watson's entrance through the auditorium, treating audience, orchestra and stage alike with sneering contempt before launching unto Tonio's Prologue. He's an extraordinary artist..."
(The Times)

"...From the moment Keel Watson dragged himself across the auditorium to deliver the prologue, we were in the presence of someone who dominated proceedings physically and vocally..."
(Opera Now)

Opera Gala / Opera Northern Ireland / 1998

"...Keel Watson showed a genuine gift for comedy in the Toreador's Song from Carmen and the Catalogue Aria from Don Giovanni..."
(The Irish Times)

Papageno / The Magic Flute / Opera Northern Ireland / 1998

"...Keel Watson's engaging Papageno, was clearly a favourite with the audience..."
(Belfast Telegraph)

Papageno / The Magic Flute / Mid Wales Opera / 1998

"...Keel Watson's genial Papageno risks moments of Beckett-like despair and carries them off triumphantly..."
(The Times)

Falstaff / Falstaff / Queen Elizabeth Hall / 1998

"...Keel Watson sings strongly as a vain and raddled old Falstaff... nobody matches him dramatically..."
(The Times)

"...good company performance, headed by a splendid Falstaff, strongly acted and sung by Keel Watson, a large, London-born bass-baritone of considerable prowess..."
(Evening Standard)

"...Everything Keel Watson's engagingly large knight does carries conviction and bonhomie, including his English words, (Finnie's new translation) and his fiercely focused singing..."
(Evening Standard)

The Elder / Country of the Blind / ENO Contemporary Opera Studio / QEH

"...Imposing Keel Watson firmly stamped his authority on the part of The Elder, and upon the other villagers..."
(Opera)