

Sæmundsson, Hrólfur - Baritone

Biography



Hrólfur Sæmundsson initially studied singing at the Reykjavik Vocal Academy before completing his MA in Music at the New England Conservatory in Boston, 2002.

His **recent and future engagements** include **Germont** in *La Traviata*, **Wozzeck**, **Michele** in *Il Tabarro*, title role in **Macbeth**, **Alberich** in *Rheingold* and *Siegfried*, **Tomski** in *The Queen of Spades* and **Don Carlo** in *Ernani*. In 2021 Hrolur sang the leading role in neo-romantic opera *Der Alpenkönig und Menschenfeind* by Leo Blech in a recording made by German Radio Deutschlandfunk.

In December 2023 Hrólfur jumped in as **Macbeth** (Verdi's *Macbeth*) in Theater Bremen for their premiere and got excellent reviews.

He has performed extensively in operas and on the concert platform in Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, Luxembourg, the UK, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and the US, as well as in his native country Iceland.

His most important roles are **Macbeth**, **Don Carlo** (*La forza del destino*), **Germont** (*La traviata*), **Miller** (*Luisa Miller*), **Rodrigo** (*Don Carlo*), **Ford** (*Falstaff*), **Escamillo** (*Carmen*), **Alberich** (*Der Ring*) **Telramund** (*Lohengrin*), **Wolfram** (*Tannhäuser*), **Kurwenal** (*Tristan und Isolde*), **Beckmesser** (*Die Meistersinger*), **Lord Ruthven** (*Der Vampyr*), the **Father** (*Hansel und Gretel*), **Sharpless** (*Madama Butterfly*), **Schaunard** and **Marcello** (*La bohème*), **Onegin** (*Eugene Onegin*), **Figaro** (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), **Don Pizarro** (*Fidelio*), **Ori** in the acclaimed new opera *Au Monde* by Philippe Boesmans, **Il Conte** (*Le nozze di Figaro*), **Don Alfonso** (*Così fan tutte*) **Don Giovanni** and **Papageno** (*Die Zauberflöte*).

He has made CD recordings, most notably with the music of Sir John Tavener to much acclaim, as well as Mahler's 8th symphony and two albums of Icelandic songs. He has performed on radio and on television, both in Iceland and the UK.

Critics have called Mr. Sæmundsson "fantastic", "superb", "favorite of the public", as well as "spectacular". His singing they have described as "having a beautiful timbre", "huge range", "dramatic power", as well as being "beautiful and effortless".

Hrólfur was the Icelandic Wagner society's singer of the year and has been nominated for both the Icelandic Music Prize and the Icelandic Theater Prize.

Repertoire

Opera

Beethoven, L.van	Fidelio	<i>Don Pizarro</i>
Bizet, G.	Carmen	<i>Escamillo</i>
Boesmans, Ph.	Au Monde	<i>Ori</i>
Debussy, C.	Pelleas et Mélisande	<i>Pelleas</i>
Glass, Ph.	La Belle et la Bête	<i>La Bête</i>
Humperdinck, E.	Hansel und Gretel	<i>The Father</i>
Marschner, H.A.	Der Vampyr	<i>Lord Ruthven</i>
Mozart, W.A.	Cosi fan tutte	<i>Don Alfonso</i>
	Don Giovanni	<i>Don Giovanni</i>
		<i>Leporello</i>
	Le nozze di Figaro	<i>Il Conte</i>
	Die Zauberflöte	<i>Papageno</i>
Puccini, G.	La boheme	<i>Schaunard</i>
	Madama Butterfly	<i>Sharpless</i>
Rossini, G.	Il barbiere di Siviglia	<i>Figaro</i>
	La cenerentola	<i>Dandoni</i>
Strauss, J.	Die Flederaus	<i>Eisenstein</i>
		<i>Falke</i>
Tchaikovsky, P.	Eugene Onegin	<i>Onegin</i>
	The Queen of Spades	<i>Tomsky</i>
Verdi, G.	Don Carlo	<i>Rodrigo</i>
	Falstaff	<i>Ford</i>
	La forza del destino	<i>Don Carlo</i>
	Luisa Miller	<i>Miller</i>
	Macbeth	<i>Macbeth</i>
	La Traviata	<i>Germont</i>
Wagner, R.	Götterdämmerung	<i>Alberich</i>
	Lohengrin	<i>Telramund</i>
	Die Meistersinger	<i>Beckmesser</i>
	Rheingold	<i>Alberich</i>
	Tannhäuser	<i>Wolfram</i>
	Tristan und Isolde	<i>Kurwenal</i>
Weber, C.M.von	Der Freischütz	<i>Kaspar</i>
		<i>Ottokar</i>

Reviews

Macbeth, Theater Bremen, 2023

From one day to the next, the Icelandic Hrólfur Sæmundsson jumped in as Macbeth for the ill Elias Gyungseok Han. He played his part with remarkable presence and variety of expression. His baritone can be imperiously powerful, but also (in the last aria) completely withdrawn and intimate.

- *Wolfgang Denker (Der Opernfreund)*

Every theater's nightmare: two days before the premiere, the leading singer falls ill.

Theater Bremen has Hrolfur Sæmundsson to thank for the fact that Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Macbeth" was still able to be performed as planned on Sunday, who on short notice jumped in for Elias Gyungseok Han. The baritone from Iceland led the musically excellent production masterfully.

- *Sebastian Loskant (Weser Kurier)*

Hrolfur Sæmundsson knows the title role best, offers buttery piano tones in the upper register and dramatic punch in equal measure, a Macbeth who we experience both as a superstitious coward as well as a power-hungry despot.

- *Sebastian Loskant (Weser Kurier)*

The fact that things went well with the last-minute cast replacement is, of course, partly due to the fact that the Icelandic baritone Sæmundsson, an internationally renowned Macbeth expert, was available to come.

- *Jan-Paul Koopmann (Kreiszzeitung)*

In the title role Theater Aachen had cast the Icelandic baritone Hrólfur Saemundsson, a member of the Aachen ensemble. This characterizes the quality of this company, because he was fantastic. Saemundsson has a huge range, a beautiful timbre and an impressive stage presence.

- *Operamagazine (The Netherlands)*

The acoustic brought out the best in baritone Hrolfur Saemundsson, already having performed an outstanding Pelleas is seen here at the top of his game. He immersed himself in the role body and soul, reflecting the contrasting facets of the character, and seems vocally completely at ease. It wasn't just his last aria that sounded superb.

- *opernnetz.de*

Hrólfur Sæmundsson surpassed himself in the title role with singing of dramatic power and bel canto cultivation and acting worthy of a matter of life and death.

- *Opera Magazine*

As Macbeth the artist surpassed himself entirely. Such dramatic, yet belcanto-esque, and saturated eruptive tones I haven't heard from him before. Also in his acting, he plays the character as if life and death were at stake. I stand in awe and admiration. Great admiration.

- *Theater Pur*

Sæmundsson brought gravitas and authoritative masculinity to the role of Germont which served to heighten the drama. Perfectly articulated, his powerful baritone voice sounded beautiful and effortless.

- *Derry journal*

Icelander Hrolfur Saemundsson was spectacular in the title role, his superb voice given full effect by the highly dramatic acting demanded by this opera.

- *Irish examiner*

From the moment he is first brought back to un-life Hrólfur Sæmundsson as Lord Ruthven was mesmerising. He may only be playing a vampire but you certainly fall under the spell of his performance. With flowing blond locks, a wonderfully powerful voice and a playful swagger he perfectly captured the essence of Byron whose exploits gave birth to the opera's story.

- *Inserttitle.ie*

Hrólfur Saemundsson, the Icelandic baritone was gloriously impressive as Der Vampyr, and he was passionate and manipulative in his blood lust, and yet managed a Romantic, tragic persona as well.

- *The Munster Express*

Wolfram too was a powerful presence, and didn't sound as if he was giving a Lieder Masterclass, which Walthers (sic) can do.

- *Opera Now*

Minnesingers were truly splendid, well directed and in beautiful voice, with Hrólfur Saemundsson's Wolfram von Eschenbach outstanding.

- *Arts Journal*

It was baritone Hrólfur Saemundsson as Giorgio Germont however who turned in the most complex performance, transitioning from a patronizing and even bullying Father figure into a guilt-ridden remorseful shell.

- *North West Telegraph*

Icelander Hrólfur Sæmundsson's Wolfram von Eschenbach (the Fischer-Dieskau role), desperate to divert the errant Tannhäuser from returning to his old ways and restore his Christian sense of duty, brought such passion and also elegance to his arias he proved one of the highlights of the entire evening.

- *behindthearras.com*

Hrólfur Sæmundsson was an honourable and introspective Wolfram who is deeply in love with Elisabeth. His plaintive 'O du, mein holder Abendstern' lacked nothing in comparison with Christian Gerhaher who nearly stopped the show recently when singing it at Covent Garden.

- *Seen and heard international*

The excellent Icelandic baritone Hrólfur Sæmundsson acted Wolfram fluently and sang with a range of colour, feeling and sensitivity that made the role seem much bigger than it is, and ensuring that his 'O du mein holder Abendstern' hung like a veil over the last Act.

- *Classical source*

Very touching and intriguing rendition of the song to the Evenstar by baritone Hrólfur Saemundsson as Wolfram.

- *Rheinische Post*

Hrólfur Saemundsson is fascinating as the increasingly depressed Ori.

- *Aachener Zeitung*

Outstanding, Hrólfur Saemundsson as Figaro is bursting with comedic talent... Sæmundsson's baritone fits Figaro like a glove.

- *Aachener Zeitung*

We want to especially mention Hrólfur Saemundsson as Ori, a smooth bass-baritone with a free flowing higher register.

- *Operagazet (Belgium)*

Posa is wonderfully sung and acted by Hrólfur Saemundsson.

- *Klenkes*

Hrolfur Saemundsson was a wonderful Figaro, and proves once again his class, also as an actor, as the slightly effeminate Barber.

- *Klenkes*

A perfect Onegin with a beautifully sounding baritone timbre.

- *Das Opernglas*