

# British Theatre Guide

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## The Return of Ulysses

Claudio Monteverdi

Welsh National Opera

Mayflower, Southampton

(2006)

Monteverdi being these days something of a connoisseurs choice, it was encouraging to see a very full house at Southamptons Mayflower for Welsh National Operas production of Monteverdis 17th century account of Homers Odyssey, *The Return of Ulysses*.

Director David Alden, like conductor Rinaldo Alessandrini, a specialist in this genre, has staged a skittish production which does much to counter the rarefied atmosphere which inhibits many audiences new to Baroque opera.

And WNO have assembled a young company of singers who thrive in the modern settings which designer Ian MacNeil has given to this lively account.

The pure tones of counter tenor Iestyn Davies (Human Frailty) provide an arresting opening as he sings the prologue of the figure tormented by the higher powers of time, fortune and love, alias Clive Bailey, Sarah Tynan (fresh from her success with ENOs [Gondoliers](#)) and Charlotte Ellett.

Kathleen Ferrier award winner Sara Fulgoni is an impressive Penelope, awaiting the long delayed return of her husband after the Trojan Wars, joined by the dark-clad suitors, the parasites, urging her to marry again.

The versatile tenor Paul Nilon cuts an heroic figure in the title role, an excellent contrast to bass Clive Bailey as Neptune.

Elizabeth Atherton is a fine Minerva and there is a nice performance by Geoffrey Dolton as the old Herdsman Eumete.

It is good, too, to hear soprano Elizabeth Vaughan, soloist for the Royal Opera in most of the great roles, returning to the stage of her early career in such good voice.

First performed at the Wales Millennium Theatre, Cardiff in September, this co-production with the Royal Danish Theatre is based on a concept by the Bavarian State Opera, Munich.

**Reviewer:** [Kevin Catchpole](#)