

## PRESSQUOTES & TESTAMONIALS

### Neil Balfour

BARITONE

**Navin / The End of the World Party / Hull Urban Opera / 2024**  
**Cond. Anita Datta / Dir. Russell Plows**

*"Neil Balfour's fine baritone, confident and focused, elevated the role of Navin..."*  
(Opera / Martin Dreyer)

**Father / Thumbprint / Portland Opera / 2023**  
**Cond. Maria Badstue / Dir. Omer Ben Seadia**

*"The softness of Neil Balfour's bass-baritone wonderfully suited the gentle Father."*  
(Northwest Reverb / James Bash)

**Safin / The Shoemaker / Welsh National Opera / 2022**  
**Cond. Max Ireland / Dir. Sita Thomas**

*"Neil Balfour, as Safin, proved to be another talent to watch, with a personal solo and sense of intimidation in the role."*  
(Buzz / James Ellis)

**Yamadori / Madam Butterfly / Welsh National Opera / 2021**  
**Cond. Carlo Rizzi / Dir. Lindy Hume**

*"with powerful cameos... Neil Balfour (a grungy, sullen Prince Yamadori) there was no discernible weak link..."*  
(Bachtrack / Mark Valencia)

*"Neil Balfour as a very likeable Yamadori..."*  
(Opera Scene / Mike Smith)

*"There seemed to be no problem sexying up the deeply perfumed Neil Balfour as Prince Yamadori"*  
(Buzzmag / James Ellis)

**Oxford Lieder Festival / Recital with Kitty Whately / 2021**  
**Anna Tilbrook (pf)**

*"He sang one of Aaron Copland's Old American Songs, 'The Boatman's Dance', with a lovely focused bass-baritone voice and characterful stage presence... and we ended with Balfour's tour-de-force in 'Buddy's Blues'"*  
(Planet Hugill)

**Ibn-Al-Haytham / Al-Haytham's Light / English Touring Opera / 2020**  
**Dir. Bradley Travis**

*"Neil Balfour was an absolute delight to work with. He arrived beautifully prepared and dedicated to the project. In fact, the level of background research he had done was very impressive, and something you don't see very often. He took on the role of physicist Ibn al-Haytham with a poise and respect that the figure deserves, while still being able to bring in his own sense of fun and nuance. Vocally, Neil excelled in the role singing with a warm, expressive, and - most importantly when it came to filming - consistent tone. Take after take Neil was 'on it' dramatically, musically, and vocally. I highly recommend working with him."*

(Bradley Travis, Director)

**Porgy / Porgy and Bess (Concert Version) / Leeds Philharmonic Chorus / 2020**  
**Cond. John Anderson**

*"One has to admit his voice is a treasure. I will plump for It ain't necessarily so for the highlight."*

(Rich Jevons, Blogger)

*"Neil has a wonderfully mellow and expressive voice. He is an intelligent musician and it was a great pleasure to work with him."*

(John Anderson, Conductor)

*"One has to admit his voice is a treasure. I will plump for It ain't necessarily so for the highlight."*

(Rich Jevons, Blogger)

*"Ol 'Man River, pensively sung by baritone Neil Balfour."*

(Wharfedale Observer / Geoffrey Mogridge)

**Mercurio / La Calisto / Longborough Festival Opera / 2019**  
**Cond. Lesley-Anne Salmon / Dir. Mathilde Lopez**

*"Neil Balfour is a superb bass-baritone as Mercurio."*

(MusicOMH / Sam Smith)

*"The hyperactive 'fixer' Mercury, sung by Neil Balfour, exuding mischief and fun. His voice came across to the audience seats strongly and he gave even what he sang, an impish feel, helped by his vocal flexibility."*

(Classical Music Daily / Roderic Dunnett)

*"The singers are also musically glamorous, capturing an impressive range of character and drama. Neil Balfour offers a certain lucid charm, as appropriate for Mercury."*

(Classicalsource / Curtis Rogers)

*"Strutting, swaggering and seducing his way across the stage in spangly suits - every smirk oozing slick, amoral entitlement - Neil Balfour the beatboxing (and how!) wingman Mercurio, just kept boogying away with the whole show. Boy, it looked fun to be him - titillating, shocking and appallingly enjoyable."*

(Birmingham Post / Richard Bratby)

**Yeti / The Cold Song / Glastonbury Contemporary Music Festival / 2019**

*"Neil Balfour is an example of the diversity of the performance at Glastonbury - I can't believe how powerful his voice was, I've never seen a piece of street theatre involving opera and costuming like he does it."*

(The Stage / Haggis McLeod (Glastonbury Programmer))

### **Sam / Dorian Gray / Proper Job Theatre / 2019**

*"Balfour delivers Sam's live music beautifully"*  
(North West End / Paul Clarke)

*"Balfour's interpretation of the score beautifully adds colour and texture to the performance – as does his to camera [monologue] taking the audience from laughter to concern within seconds."*  
(Cumbria24.com)

*"Neil Balfour creates a real zany flair about the character of Sam, providing areas of comic relief – yet it is seeing the comic, loveable side of Sam that makes watching his struggles all-the-more upsetting; His music and creativity gives the production real performative flair."*  
(VisitManchester / Emily Oldfield)

*"The intermittent music was both sweet and sinister, carrying a clear feeling of poignancy. It was gorgeously sung and played."*  
(9 Reviews / Sam Lowe)

### **Dottore Grenvil / La traviata / Devon Opera / 2018** **Cond. Jonathan Pease / Dir. Rachael Hewer**

*"Neil Balfour is an exceptional colleague both in the rehearsal room and on stage. He is focused, versatile as a performer and instinctively extremely musical. He came thoroughly prepared; enthusiastic, energetic and with an infectious positive attitude. His commitment and determination to achieve the highest standard of performance cannot be surpassed. I very much look forward to working with him again at the earliest opportunity."*  
(Rachael Hewer, Director)

*"Neil was a joy to work with. A commanding stage presence. We are particularly grateful to him for leading our vocal / stagecraft workshop at Stover School where the participants responded so well to Neil's warm personality, communication and coaching skills."*  
(Robert Hough, Devon Opera)

### **Colline / La bohème – Colline / OFMAN Opera, Madrid / 2018**

*"His voice was brilliant for the role, with very good clarity and purity as well as very careful projection and diction. At stage level, he was unbeatable, granting realism and quality to the character."*  
(Francisco Antonia Moya, Musical Director)

### **La-La / A Shoe Full of Stars / Opera Schmopera / 2018**

*"Neil Balfour possesses an exceptionally beautiful baritone voice ... an outstanding soloist. He directly contributed to the production's winning of the YAMAward for Best Opera for Young People 2018. Neil is an entrepreneur, an artist, a leader, an educator and an open heart with whom I hope everyone has the privilege of working with repeatedly."*  
(Omar Sharyar, Artistic Director)

*"A principal with authority, command and style. Generous, empathetic artist with an exceptional stage personality. Evident attention to textual detail, musical nuance and interpretive expression. Elegant leading man. Characterisation of depth and insight, displaying a broad span of dramatic Interpretation. An energised visceral performer that provokes excitement."*  
(Stefan Janski, Director)

*"Neil is without a doubt one of the top singers I've ever worked with. In fact he is a director's dream -- always completely prepared for a role but very flexible and inventive in the rehearsal room, and completely physically and emotionally engaged with both voice and body. In community and education settings, he is acutely aware of the needs of the participants and coaches, leads and inspires them in addition to giving everything to his own role. He is a wonderful, positive and supportive force in the rehearsal room and an asset to any production."*

(Ruth Mariner, Gestalt Arts)

**Title role / Don Pasquale / Mananan Opera / 2018**  
**Mustafà / The Italian Girl in Algiers / Mananan Opera / 2017**

*"Charismatic stage artist, you cannot take your eyes off him. Strong sense of dramatic timing. Evident physical co-ordination. Expressive face and body. A creative artist and musician, an exceptional ensemble player. A mime artist in the style of Marcel Marceau with a flair for comedy. His improvisation skills in the context of live theatre keep you on the edge of your seat."*

(Stefan Janski, Director)

*"The Bey himself, Mustafa (a devilishly handsome Neil Balfour), flirted insanely with the audience and his compatriots on stage with a mischievous zeal. We should hate this man for his misogyny but love him for his ridiculousness."*

(IOM Today / Fiona Helleur)

**Father / Mysterious 44 / Feelgood Theatre Productions / 2016**

*"Neil's artistry was perfect for the principal baritone role in the premiere of the Mark Twain opera Mysterious 44. Intelligent, passionate, flexible, golden-toned singing and impressive acting, and excellent integration with the rest of the cast. A gem of a musician to work with."*

(Kevin Malone, Composer)

**Lord Ellington / La Vie Parisienne / RNCM / 2016**  
**Cond. Andrew Greenwood / Dir. Stuart Barker**

*"Neil Balfour excelled as Lord Ellington the minor English aristocrat wearing a loud houndstooth-patterned suit, giving a convincing performance with considerable stage presence. Very much at home in the role, Balfour used his attractive voice, smooth with a slight dark edge, to his best advantage."*

(Seen & Heard International / Michael Cookson)

*"One of the best actors this evening was undoubtedly Neil Balfour as Lord Ellington. A truly delightful interpretation, and an actor who actually understood that the acting was just as important, if not more so, than the singing."*

(NorthWestEnd.co.uk / Mark Dee)

**Don Alfonso / Così fan tutte / RNCM / 2016**  
**Cond. Roger Hamilton / Dir. Thomas Guthrie**

*"Neil is really excellent in many ways, he stepped in and learnt Don Alfonso for me in a couple of weeks (and did a fine job), and covered Figaro last summer. He's one of those conscientious, humble, strong contributors who process things fast, act very well and sing excellently."*

(Thomas Guthrie, Director)

*"Neil took on the rôle of Don Alfonso at very short notice, after music rehearsals had taken place and production rehearsals had already started. He was therefore faced with the challenging task of learning a substantial part, in Italian, while catching up on a developing production. He produced a fine performance."*

*His Alfonso was dramatically alive and compelling, and he sang extremely well ... an achievement that he can be very proud of."*

(Roger Hamilton, Conductor)

*"Don Alfonso played and sung by Neil Balfour brought this part to riveting life throughout both on-stage and in observation mode. Outstanding. The best Don Alfonso I have ever heard!"*

(www.list.co.uk / Gwenda Meredith)

*"Neil Balfour had presence and maturity as Don Alfonso"*

(Robert Beale, Manchester Theatre Awards / Robert Beale)

**Quince / A Midsummer Night's Dream / RNCM / 2015**  
**Cond. Andrew Greenwood / Dir. Garth Bardsley**

*"Neil is an intelligent and sensitive actor with an innate ability to adapt to varied styles of repertoire... a natural comic actor, as was clearly revealed by his performance as Quince. Neil is an accomplished musician and as with his acting ability, he is able to work in a number of styles – he is as comfortable singing Mozart as he is performing Sondheim. I have every confidence that he will become a successful and perhaps notable performer."*

(Garth Bardsley, Director)

*"I have had the pleasure of teaching Neil Balfour... he is an accomplished all round musician, a good pianist and conductor also. This musicality reflects in his singing. He has an incisive ear and is quick to assimilate musical detail. His voice is rich and clean."*

(Quentin Hayes)