

## MIAH PERSSON

### Hugh Canning

Persson sings her first Anne Trulove  
at Glyndebourne this month



**T**he Swedish soprano Miah Persson returns to Glyndebourne this month, four years after her sensational debut there as Fiordiligi (also her role debut) in Nicholas Hytner's 2006 production of *Così fan tutte*. She is partnered by the Tom Rakewell of the Finnish tenor Topi Lehtipuu, her Ferrando in 2006 and at Salzburg last year.

Persson lives in Lewes with her husband, the British tenor Jeremy Ovenden, and their two children, infant-school-age Ella and toddler Ed, and she seems to have contradicted the old Glyndebourne lore that if you buy a house in Lewes (as many singers do) you never sing at Glyndebourne again! She's in good company, however: Felicity Lott's career at the festival was done no harm by living so close, and one hopes it will be the same for Persson. In fact, it was during her preparations for *Così* that she and Ovenden decided Lewes would be an ideal location for their new home (handy for Gatwick and London). When we met there earlier this year during a break in her schedule, she enthused about the summer of 2006 at Glyndebourne.

'I would have loved to go back to repeat the *Così* production, because it's very rare when you get a cast that really gels. It was such a lovely seven weeks of rehearsals. Anke [Vondung] and I almost became sisters. She came house-hunting with me. Jeremy was away working and I thought while I was here, why don't I go looking at houses? We had a great time together!'

Certainly, the chemistry between the four young lovers in the first run of Hytner's production was something special, casting a magic spell (something that survives on the DVD made at the time) over Glyndebourne's most-performed opera. At the time, Persson, a natural Susanna and Pamina, was considered lightweight casting for Fiordiligi, although it is not unprecedented: Irmgard Seefried notably sang all three roles throughout the 1950s, and Persson has something of that great soprano's limpid, luminous vocal beauty. Her success at Glyndebourne led to new productions in Frankfurt (2007) and Salzburg last summer; next season she sings Fiordiligi at the Met, a challenge that Seefried possibly might not have risked. Persson remains undaunted, however.

'I'm doing *Così* in Munich [a Covent Garden-sized house] and the Met. In New York it's with Isabel Leonard, who was my Dorabella in Salzburg. When they asked me to sing Fiordiligi at the Met—this was before I'd sung the role at Glyndebourne—I thought gosh, can that be right? But now that I've done two productions there