



Rising star

Available at the right time, soprano Kiera Duffy made her Wigmore Hall debut with just five days' notice – a success which led to her debut recording for Hyperion

Last year, pianist Roger Vignoles found himself in the difficult position of having to find a last-minute replacement singer for his Strauss Lieder series at the Wigmore Hall – a series planned in parallel with his ongoing complete edition of the Strauss songs for Hyperion Records. Not only had he to find an artist of the appropriate calibre, but whoever he invited must be able to sing the fearsomely difficult *Brentano-Lieder*, seldom performed in their entirety.

His regular partners with the necessary repertoire were not free, so his manager began ringing round singers' agents in the hope that someone could be found. Eventually, Kiera Duffy was suggested to Vignoles, who liked the clips on her website. 'I asked "OK, can she do the *Brentano-Lieder*?" and they said, yes, she'd sung them,' says Vignoles. 'She had the time to

learn the other songs I needed, and she would learn them.'

Duffy tells a slightly different story: 'I kind of lied a little bit! I had sung, I think, three or four of them in my senior recital in college – but that was ten years ago. This was a huge opportunity, and I'd do whatever it took to learn the rest!' Duffy started out as a pianist,

and finds this helps when confronted with new repertoire: 'I've always been very confident in my music-learning ability. But, even though it was only half a recital, it was daunting, no doubt about it – it was a Wigmore Hall debut with Roger Vignoles, who's an idol of mine!'

Her chutzpah paid off. She had five days of intensive study before flying to London and meeting Vignoles for rehearsals at his house (another 'pinch-me' moment for Duffy).

'I give him so much credit because here I am, this kind of no-name, young American singer; he could easily have just coached me, told me how he wants to do the programme and that would have been fine. But there's such a collaborative spirit with Roger, he really worked together *with* me, and that made the project all that more special.'

Vignoles was equally impressed: 'The very first session, we just clicked musically. I could

"It was quite clear that recording didn't faze her at all"

– Roger Vignoles
