

# Brad Cohen

## Biography

Brad Cohen is acclaimed for his direction of Italian and French opera, and is in demand by opera houses worldwide for his conducting of Verdi, Puccini and the *bel canto* repertoire. His artistic activities go far beyond this special interest - from making contemporary opera for television in collaboration with the composer Jonathan Dove, to an active and innovative symphonic conducting career. In addition, he has toured the chamber works of Frank Zappa and has an active role as an editor and publisher of Urtext operatic editions. Brad also has a burgeoning media career, and was most recently seen on UK television as a mentor on the highly successful BBC2 series *Maestro*.



<http://www.bradcohen.net>

### Early Years and education

The Australian conductor Brad Cohen began to learn the violin at the age of four, and subsequently studied piano, organ, harpsichord, percussion and voice. He was boy soloist at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, and at the age of fourteen was appointed Organ Scholar there. At fifteen he won an organ scholarship to the UK, to complete his schooling at the King's School Canterbury. While there, he sang the role of Curly in *Oklahoma!*, improvised stage music for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and was awarded music and academic scholarships. In 1984 Brad was elected Paddy Organ Scholar at St John's College Oxford where, in addition to studying music, he began to form and conduct orchestras.

### Early Career

On leaving Oxford with first class honours, Brad studied with Celibidache and Bernstein in Germany as an exchange scholar in Munich, and on his return to the UK in 1989 he was appointed Opera Conducting Scholar at the Royal College of Music.

*"After a year of demanding, sometimes esoteric studies with Celibidache, my time watching and talking to Bernstein at the 1989 Schleswig-Holstein Festival was a liberation", says Brad. "Lenny was an enabler: he broke the shackles of my academic training, and gave me a fresh connection to making music instinctively".*

In 1990 he became Junior Fellow at the RNCM and made his professional debut at the 1992 Almeida Festival. In 1994 he was awarded first prize in the Leeds Conductors' Competition. His orchestral engagements include the London Philharmonic (Barbican), Royal Philharmonic (Royal Albert Hall and Opera Holland Park), the Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgarter Philharmoniker, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Het Gelders Orkest, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (Bath Festival), Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Edinburgh International Festival), City of London Sinfonia, and the Orchestra of St. John's Smith Square.

## Opera

"At last count, my repertoire includes eighty operas, from Cavalli to Adès", comments Brad. "Working with opera orchestras around the world is a constant reminder of the variety of performance traditions, and the fresh perspective each of these styles can give to our interpretations".

Brad has conducted *From the House of the Dead* and *Carmen* for English National Opera, *Carmen*, *The Merry Widow*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *L'elisir d'amore* and *La Cenerentola* for Opera Australia, *The Magic Flute*, *The Pearl Fishers* and *The Reluctant King* for Opera North, and *Rigoletto* and *Figaro* for English Touring Opera. For Almeida Opera he conducted many premieres between 1992 and 1998, including the world premiere of Thomas Adès' *Powder her Face* (also performed at Cheltenham Festival, Bath and Oxford) and in 1998 Guo Wenjing's *Wolfcub Village* and *Night Banquet* (also Hong Kong Festival). Other operatic work includes *Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Poliuto*, *Il pirata*, *I Lombardi*, *Anna Bolena*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Beatrice di Tenda* and *Macbeth* for Chelsea Opera Group, *Macbeth* for Opera New Zealand, *Die Fledermaus* for Opera Queensland, *Così fan tutte* for Opera Theatre Company Dublin, *Nabucco*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Pearl Fishers*, *Norma*, *La Sonnambula*, *Fedora* and *Nabucco* for Opera Holland Park, *La Traviata* for Luzern, Jonathan Dove's *Tobias and the Angel* for CBTO, *The Turn of the Screw* for Porto 2001, *Armida*, *Tancredi*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Maometto secondo* and *Mosca's L'italiana in Algeri* for the Rossini in Wildbad Festival, *Cavalleria rusticana* & *I Pagliacci* in the Royal Albert Hall, *Luisa Miller* and *Manon* for the Nederlands Nationale Reisopera, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Angers/Nantes Opera.

## New Music

Brad has a strong involvement in the performance of new music. His diverse activities in this field include filming modern opera for television, touring the ensemble pieces of Frank Zappa, and commissioning music for the opening of the Millennium Dome.

"Taking Zappa's music around the UK with the Composer's Ensemble was fantastically invigorating", says Brad. "We re-arranged *Alien Orifice* for the tour, and the audiences responded so freely and enthusiastically to his music - shouted interjections and cheers were a common feature of the concerts. It was a refreshing break from 'classical' concert formality".

In 2002 Brad was Musical Director of Jonathan Dove's television opera *When She Died: Death of a Princess*, commissioned from Tiger Aspect for Channel Four and first shown in August 2002. In 2006 the same team created the television opera *Man on the Moon* for Channel Four. Brad also led the Australian premiere of Jonathan Dove's opera *Flight* at the 2006 Adelaide Festival.

## Recent and current engagements

Brad made his Swedish opera debut with Peter Konwitschny's production of *La bohème* in August 2008, to a rapturous critical reception. Immediate invitations to a variety of Scandinavian opera houses followed, and he made his debut with Malmö Opera in September 2009, conducting a new production of *La Cenerentola*.

2010 sees his Broadway debut, conducting Jonathan Dove's *The Enchanted Pig*; a visit to Mauritius to establish a scholarship fund for Mauritian musicians; his debut for West Australian Opera with *Carmen*; *Pelléas et Mélisande* for Opera Holland Park in a new production by Olivia Fuchs; and his debut for Opera Hedeland with *Norma*, starring Nadja Michael as Norma, and produced by Staffan Valdemar Holm.

## Recordings

Brad's second disc for Chandos - highlights of Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri* with Jennifer Larmore and the Philharmonia – was released in April 2009. His debut recording for Deutsche Grammophon, a recital with Emma Matthews and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo, was released in August 2009.

His first CDs, *Maometto secondo* (recorded live at the 2002 Rossini in Wildbad Festival) and Mosca's *L'italiana in Algeri*, were released in 2004. In 2006 his recording of *Le Comte Ory* appeared, also on Naxos, followed by a 2007 highlights disc of Brad's own *Pearl Fishers* edition, with Simon Keenlyside, Rebecca Evans, and Alastair Miles.

## Publishing

As an important complement to his performing career, Brad has become an accomplished operatic editor, and, since his first critical edition of *Les Pêcheurs de perles* was published worldwide by Peters Edition in 2002, he has completed and published editions of *Maometto secondo*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Norma*.  
[www.performingeditions.com](http://www.performingeditions.com)

## Media

Brad was one of the mentors for *Maestro*, a major new UK television series on BBC 2 in which eight famous amateurs with a passion for classical music learned to conduct an orchestra. Brad mentored Alex James, ex-bass player of Blur. The highly-successful show was broadcast between August and September 2008.

He lives in Oxfordshire with his family.

## Recent Press

### La bohème, Värmlandsoperan 2008

#### Puccini for real

*"This is a throbbing Bohème, one that pulls and tears. Purrs and spits, rubs and caresses...Brad Cohen makes his Swedish opera debut, leading the Värmland Sinfonietta in an intense interpretation. I hear qualities in Puccini's music I have seldom noticed before. At some moments it is pure chamber music, at others I am stunned by the force of the full orchestra."*

Per Feltzin, Sveriges Radio/Kulturnytt, 6/8/2008

#### Sensation in Karlstad

*"Saturday's premiere was a performance that took your breath away...Brad Cohen leads the Värmland Sinfonietta in music-making as implacable and unsentimental as what we see on the stage. Where melodies are broken and bound together in a seamless flow and where sounds, according to the atmosphere, change from crystalline to veiled. In addition, Värmlandsoperan gives us an ensemble that sings as if their lives depended on it."*

Martin Nyström, Dagens Nyheter, 7/8/2008

### Il trovatore, Opera Holland Park 2008

*"Under Brad Cohen, the City of London Sinfonia underlines the suavity and variety of the score, playing with an alluring tone and tight articulation - each section a jewel, from the honeyed clarinets to the incisive upper strings."*

Anna Picard, Independent on Sunday, 8/6/2008

*"Brad Cohen's conducting is all fire and steel."*

Tim Ashley, The Guardian, 5/6/2008

*"Brad Cohen conducts the City of London Sinfonia with sensitive flexibility and rigour."*

Hilary Finch, The Times, 6/6/2008

For further information please go to <http://www.bradcohen.net>

For all press enquiries please contact:

Jill Cotton / Jane Acton

Colman Getty

Tel: 0207 631 2666

Email: [jill@colmangetty.co.uk](mailto:jill@colmangetty.co.uk) / [jane@colmangetty.co.uk](mailto:jane@colmangetty.co.uk)