

## Vita of Robert Crowe, PhD, MMus, MBA

Robert began his musical life in the backseat of the family car, singing in three and four part harmony with his older sister, younger brothers and his mother. At age 11 he began to play the clarinet and progressed to the point of playing a few, fitful, paid gigs during his junior and senior years in high school. He went to Millsaps College, in Jackson, Mississippi, with the intention of getting a degree in political science with a clarinet minor, before heading to law school. In his first week of his freshman year, however, he auditioned for the Millsaps Singers and, much to his surprise, was allowed into the first bass then, very quickly, into second tenor section. This, as the cliché goes, was a game changer. After a brief period as an English major, he changed to voice studies, studying with tenor McCarroll Ayers, and graduating with a Bachelor of Music in voice performance (*magna cum laude*) in 1992.

Robert travelled north, with no little trepidation, to study voice with heldentenor, Kammersänger Richard Cassilly at Boston University. Cassilly heard both the very unimpressive tenor voice and the nascent countertenor voice that had seen its debut in early 1992, and said "with a countertenor voice like that, I don't know why you'd ever want to try to be a tenor." In 1992 this was something of a left-handed compliment, countertenors not being as widely accepted as they now are. Nevertheless, he switched to full-time countertenor singing, graduating from Boston University in 1994 with a Master of Music in voice performance. In 1994 he went to the Manhattan School of Music for a one year, Professional Studies Program, studying with tenor Charles Bressler. In the winter and spring of 1995 he won first place in first the Oklahoma district, then in the Midwest Regional finals of the Metropolitan Opera Competition, and in April was named a national winner, only the second countertenor in history to be so honored. In point of fact, he was the first male soprano, though he was still using the old designation. That summer he sang his first professional operatic role, Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Des Moines Metro Opera.

Between 1995 and 1997 he began his long (still ongoing) period of vocal study, using as a primary source the writings of Pier Francesco Tosi, in order to learn to successfully navigate the punishing male soprano tessitura and repertoire. In 1997 he sang Sesto in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* at the Virginia Opera, a recording of which was later released on Koch International Classics. In 1999 Robert made another leap of faith, moving to Germany to sing at the Staatsoper unter den Linden in Hasse's *Solimano*, with René Jacobs, followed quickly by a run as Nero in Handel's *Agrippina* at the Handel Festival in Halle an der Saale. For the next seven years Robert concentrated on the male (castrato) soprano operatic repertoire, singing at all three Handel festivals, including several productions in Halle and Karlsruhe, with guest appearances at the Teatro Massimo (in the title role of Alessandro Scarlatti's *Massimo Puppieno*) and in several Mozart operas at the Mozart Festival of Warsaw. Highlights included the role of Giulio Cesare in the acclaimed 2003 production of Ferrandini's *Catone in Utica* at Munich's Cuivillé Theater, released the next year on Oehms Classics.

In 2006 Robert began a new phase, singing a series of concerts with organist Michael Eberth and bass Joel Fredericksen. In 2007, he and Eberth recorded a CD of the

solo soprano motets of Giacomo Carissimi, released on Hänssler Profil Editions and named to *Crescendo* magazine's Year's Best list for 2008. Crowe researched and transcribed into modern editions all of the music on this CD (though he discovered in 2012 that the motet *Oleum Effusum Est*, long ascribed to Giacomo Carissimi was actually mostly by Barbara Strozzi with an appended setting of Psalm 22 by an anonymous, probably late seventeenth-century English composer) and wrote the CD's liner notes.

Two years later, Crowe and Eberth released a second solo CD, solo motets of Alessandro Grandi, Giacomo Carissimi and Claudio Monteverdi, also with Hänssler Profil Editions. As with the first, all of the music on this recording was researched and edited by Robert, who also wrote the liner notes. This recording also enjoyed glowing reviews in Europe, the US and Asia. At this point Robert, having been introduced to project management as the head producer of both recordings, began a bi-lingual MBA at the Fachhochschule für Ökonomie und Management in Berlin, finishing among the "Jahres Besten" in 2011 with emphases in project management and human resources management. Though still maintaining a full schedule as an opera singer and, increasingly, a concert singer, Robert decided that music and musicology, rather than business, lay closer to his heart. In 2012 he returned to Boston University to begin his studies as a PhD student in historical musicology. Under the guidance of Joshua Rifkin and Victor Coelho, he has presented papers and/or lecture recitals at numerous academic conferences, among them: American Musicological Society in Milwaukee and Rochester, Transnational Opera Studies Conference@Bologna and @Bern, Society of Seventeenth-Century Music in San Antonio, Nineteenth Century Music in Great Britain in Cardiff, Doctors in Performance in Dublin, Falling out of Line in Graz, and the International Conference for Baroque Music in Salzburg.

Having completed his PhD dissertation "Giambattista Velluti in London, 1825-1829: Literary Constructions of the Last Operatic Castrato," in May 2017, he has undertaken a Vellutian Tryptich. This will, hopefully, over the course of the next few years, culminate in a book-length treatment of most of the themes covered in the dissertation, a critical edition of 25 of Velluti's ornamented arias and a companion CD of (some) of the same music. In the summer of 2016 Robert's ensemble, *Lux et Umbrae* recorded the modern premiere of Johann Ernst Galliard's 1728 *Hymn of Adam and Eve* with the Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk. In the past year, Robert created the roles of Cardinal Bellarmine in the world premiere of Roger Doyle's electronic opera *Heresy* concerning the life, trial and execution of Giordano Bruno in October and November of 2016 in Dublin, Ireland whilst touring that country with a solo concert of Velluti's music for the salon, accompanied by pianist Simon Harden. Concurrent with the completion of his PhD he also recorded his third solo CD, featuring Handel's 9 "Amen, Alleluias", with Victor Coelho's and David Dolata's *Il Furioso*. Robert lives in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, at the foot of the Swabian Alps.