

# Roberto Balconi

COUNTERTENOR AND CONDUCTOR

He studied voice in his native city, Milan, with Biancamaria Casoni and in England with Evelyn Tubb. He then obtained a Laurea (cum laude) in Opera at the Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali 'Franco Vittadini', Pavia, with a thesis on the historical figure of the falsettist.

While his repertory ranges from the Middle Ages to contemporary music, he has focused particularly on the style and technique of Baroque music, establishing himself internationally as one of its most accomplished performers.

He has worked with groups such as the *English Baroque Soloists*, *Il Giardino Armonico*, *Il Complesso Barocco*, *The Consort of Musicke*, *Ensemble Baroque de Limoges*, *Ensemble Pian & Forte*, *Venice Baroque Orchestra*, *Ensemble Aurora*, *Il Concerto Italiano*, *La cappella della Pietà dei Turchini*, *Europa Galante*, *Sprezzatura*, and *Capella Savaria*; he has appeared in the most important international festivals of Early Music and opera houses, such as the *Holland Festival Oude Muziek*, *Festival van Vlaanderen*, *York Early Music Festival*, *Festival International de Musique Baroque Beaune*, *Brugge Festival*, *Opéra de Lyon*, *Musica e Poesia a San Maurizio Milano*, *Berliner Tage für Alte Musik*, *London Queen Elizabeth Hall*, *Wiener Konzerthaus*, *Teatro Tivoli Copenhagen*, *Berkeley Festival*, *Lincoln Center New York*.

He made his opera debut in 1993 at *La Fenice* in Venice in Tommaso Traetta's "*Buovo D'Antona*", conducted by Alan Curtis and directed by Pierluigi Pizzi. His subsequent operatic career includes Händel's "*Semele*" in a production at Vlamse Opera, conducted by Marc Minkowski and directed by Robert Carsen; Händel's "*Siroe*" for the Teatro La Fenice and the *BAM Theatre New York*, conducted by Andrea Marcon and directed by Jorge Lavelli; Monteverdi's trilogy under the direction of Ottavio Dantone; and "*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*" with Rinaldo Alessandrini and Graham Vick at the *Teatro Comunale Bologna*, under the direction of Sir John Eliot Gardiner at the *Queen Elizabeth Hall* in London, and with Alessandro Demarchi at the *Hamburger Staatsoper*; Vivaldi's "*La Fida Ninfa*" with Alan Curtis and Pier'Alli at the *Teatro Filarmonico* of Verona. With the group *La Venexiana*, he took part in the first modern performance of Cavalli's *Artemisia* at *Herrenhausen Festival*, Hannover and at *Montpellier Opéra Comique*.

He has moreover appeared in concerts under the direction of world-renowned Baroque specialists, including Ivan Fischer, Fabio Biondi, Corrado Rovaris, Antonio Florio, Giovanni Antonini, Christoph Coin, Claudio Astronio, Diego Fasolis, Gustav Leonhardt, and Robert King.

He participated in the world premiere of Luis De Pablo's "*Passio*," with the *RAI Orchestra*, Turin, conducted by Gianandrea Noseda; and the Lugano-based Project *Marta Argerich*, in the world premiere of "*Il vecchio nel granturco*" by Jorge Bosso.

In recent years, he has also been active as a conductor, particularly with the instrumental and vocal ensemble "Fantazyas," which he founded in 2000 together with instrumentalists and singers specializing in Baroque music. With Fantazyas, he has appeared both as a conductor and a soloist, for example at the Musashino Civic Cultural Hall, Tokyo, with a programme of Steffani's duets (recorded for ALM Records, Tokyo); at Felicia Blumenthal Festival in Tel Aviv, singing and conducting Italian music of the 18th century; at the festival Musica e Poesia at San Maurizio, Milan, with a programme devoted to German sacred music from Luther to Bach; at Festival Organistico di Aosta, for which he made a reconstruction of a vesper for voices and basso continuo, on music by Monteverdi; at the festival Sastamala Gregoriana, in Finland, with a programme of Seconda Prattica - Madrigals.

Among the works he has conducted are the operas Ariodante and Alceste, the oratorio La Resurrezione, the Concerti Grossi op. 6 and the Chandos Anthems by Händel; the Motets and several cantatas by Bach; Monteverdi Orfeo and Vespers; the Stabat Mater settings by Domenico Scarlatti, Pergolesi and Vivaldi; The Seven Last Words of Christ by Haydn; Dido and Aeneas, Incidental Music, and the Funeral Music for Queen Mary by Henry Purcell; La Serva Padrona by Pergolesi; cantatas by Buxtehude, symphonies by Sammartini, and sacred music by Mozart. With Fantazyas, he is currently exploring the Italian madrigal repertory; he has performed programmes dedicated to Monteverdi and Sigismondo D'India, and he has recorded the Second Books of Madrigals for five and six Voices by Giovanni Ghizzolo, for Brilliant Classics.

Invited several times as guest conductor at the Baroque orchestra Accademia dell'Arcadia in Poznan, Poland, with which he has made the first recording of Duni's Les deux chasseurs et la laitier and Orłowski's Symphony in F major, published by Brilliant Classics; he has been artistic director of the Händel Festival Poznan and he was also given a Poznan Cultural Ambassador title. He has conducted also the instrumental and vocal ensemble Cantimbanco, for a performance of music by Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli and the first recording of Mottetti in Cantilena by Stefano Bernardi.

Since academic year 2009/2010, he is a professor of Baroque singing at Conservatorio "Guido Cantelli", Novara. Since 2004, he has taught Baroque singing at Milano Civica Scuola di Musica "Claudio Abbado", supplementing his vocal teaching with orchestral instruction and conducting in the master classes of the Baroque Orchestra. As an expert of Baroque repertory and performance practice, he has taught in numerous masterclasses and special seminars at conservatories, music academies, and universities.

He has recorded for DG Archiv, Virgin Classics, Harmonia Mundi France, Brilliant Classics, Opus 111, Nuova Era, Arcana, Glossa, Bongiovanni, Symphonia, Stradivarius, Arts, Tactus, Naxos, and many European radio and tv stations.