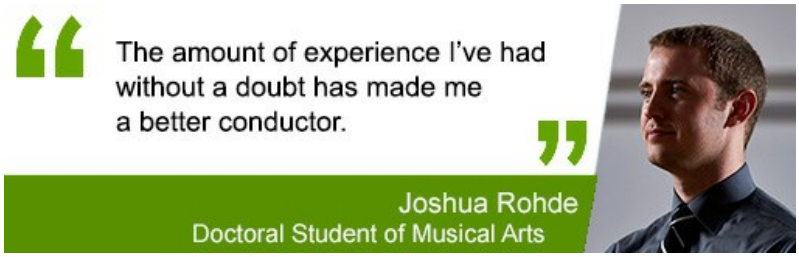
Music alumni profiles

Joshua Rohde, Music MA: Choral Conducting, 2014



Joshua Rohde completed the **Choral Conducting pathway of the Music MA (/postgraduate/courses/taught/music/choral-conducting.aspx)** in 2014 and is currently studying a Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting at Boston University.

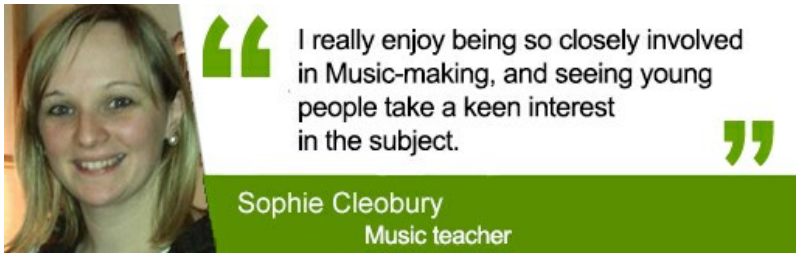
He writes: "I got two undergraduate degrees at the University of Minnesota: a Bachelor of Music (BM) in Cello Performance and a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. After that, I moved to Boston University and did a Masters of Sacred Music in Choral Conducting, before going to Birmingham to study the Choral Conducting programme. After leaving Birmingham, I returned to Boston to pursue my doctorate. Professionally, I want to go on to teach at a college or university, so pursuing higher education is essential in order to be the best conductor and teacher that I can.

I went to Birmingham because I wanted to study abroad and to study and work in a different system at the highest level. For me, the MA was about the experience and learning from a fantastic and knowledgeable mentor – Simon Halsey. The connection with the CBSO and the tradition of singing in the UK in general was also a great pull for me.

What I enjoyed most about studying at Birmingham was the opportunity to gain experience - it wasn't just classes and textbooks, but extensive podium time, performing with the CBSO, in depth work with three University choirs, and the many more opportunities. The amount of experience I've had without a doubt has made me a better conductor; I'm more musical, my brain is so much quicker, my ear is better, and I've got a more developed set of skills. I am also leaving the programme with good professional connections, which is important. Both Simon and the University were very good with us [on the course], working with our strengths and helping us learn new things.

I went to Birmingham because it's an international place, an international city - and I had a great time there. For me, going into my professional life, my professional career, being able to say that I've lived abroad, that I've studied and worked in the UK - it's great."

Sophie Cleobury, MPhil Music, 2006



Sophie currently works as a music teacher in London and graduated from Birmingham in 2004 with a **BMus (Hons) (/undergraduate/courses/music/music.aspx)** before going on to complete an **MPhil in Music (recently re-named MA by Research) (/postgraduate/courses/research/music/music-performance-practice.aspx)** here in 2006.

"I originally went into Arts Management, spending three years at the National Opera Studio as the Planning Coordinator. I then spent 9 months at the Royal Opera House as the Artistic Administrator for the OperaGenesis programme, before being promoted to a Producer in ROH. I was project managing productions of contemporary opera and dance in the Linbury Studio Theatre, Clore Studio and other venues in the Royal Opera House, as well as at external events as far reaching as Latitude Festival.

After six years working in the Arts, I decided on a career change, and have been teaching Music in a Senior School in South West London for nearly a year now. I am privileged to be able to enthuse young students about Music on a daily basis. I really enjoy being so closely involved in Music-making, and seeing young people take a keen interest in the subject. Being able to impart your own knowledge is tremendously exciting."

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