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The Australian tenor Michael Smallwood commenced vocal training while completing a law degree at the University of Melbourne. After studies at the Victorian College of the Arts, the Australian National Academy of Music and New York's Juilliard School, he entered the prestigious Opera Studio of the Hamburg State Opera in 2001, later becoming a member of the ensemble.

He has worked in many major houses in Europe and the US, including The Santa Fe Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Glyndebourne, The Flemish Opera (Vlaamse Opera), Opéra de Lyon, Opéra National de Bordeaux, Opéra de Dijon, Chicago Opera Theater, Badisches Staatstheater, Deutsche Staatsoper (Berlin), the Komische Oper Berlin, Barcelona's Liceu, the Nederlandse Opera, and Staatsoper Kassel, as well as returning regularly to the Hamburg State Opera. Festival appearances have included: Ravinia, Aspen, the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts, the RuhrTriennale, Lincoln Center Festival and the Händel Festspiele (Halle and Karlsruhe).

In opera and concert he has worked with many important conductors including Yves Abel, Richard Farnes, Vladimir Jurowski, Friedemann Layer, Ingo Metzmacher, Julius Rudel, Ulf Schirmer, Steven Sloane, Stefan Soltesz, Constantinos Carydis, Ilan Volkov, Alfred Eschwe, Karl-Heinz Steffens, Marek Janowski, Michael Boder, Sir Simon Rattle, and Tomáš Netopil. A sought-after performer of baroque music, he has worked with William Christie, Alessandro de Marchi, Hermann Max, Michael Hofstetter, Jane Glover, Thomas Hengelbrock, Andreas Sperring and Konrad Junghänel.

His operatic roles span the length and breadth of the repertoire: from Monteverdi's »Orfeo«, Handel's Acis, Grimoaldo (»Rodelinda«), Lurcanio (»Ariodante«) and Oronte (»Alcina«), Mozart's Tamino, Belmonte, Ferrando, Arbace and Don Ottavio, Gluck's Orphée and Renaud (»Armide«) through Wagner's David, von Flotow's Lyonel (»Martha«), Verdi's Fenton, Strauss' Flamand and Henry Morosus (»Die Schweigsame Frau«), Kudrjas (»Katya Kabanova«), Lysander and Flute (»A Midsummer Night's Dream«) and Albert Herring, Berg's Andres (»Wozzeck«) and Maler (»Lulu«). In operetta, he has been heard as Alfred (»Die Fledermaus«) and Léhar's Camille and Bernstein's Candide. No stranger to modern music, he has performed works by Luigi Nono, Hans Werner Henze, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Peter Eötvös, Jonathan Dove, Olga Neuwirth, Ned Rorem and Philip Glass.

In 2013, he became a member of the ensemble in Essen's renowned Aalto Theater, focusing on the works of Mozart (Tamino, Ottavio, Ferrando, Belmonte, Arbace), Handel (Lurcanio/Ariodante) and Strauss (Brighella/Airadne, Henry Morosus/Die Schweigsame Frau). In 2014 he has been heard in concerts in Australia, France and Germany. In 2015, he returns to Berlin's Komische Oper and Staatsoper.

His DVDs include Robert Carsen's »Capriccio« with Renee Fleming at the Opera National de Paris, »Die Entführung aus dem Serail« from the Netherlands Opera, Willy Decker's »Moses und Aron« from the RuhrTriennale, Don Ottavio in Jean-Yves Ruf's production from the Opéra de Dijon, and the award-winning DVD of David Poutney's production of Zimmermann's »Die Soldaten« also from the RuhrTriennale. In July 2009, the world premier recording of Bruch's »Arminius« conducted by Hermann Max with the Göttingen Symphony was released by the CPO label. In 2011 followed a live recording of Britten's »A Midsummer Night's Dream« from the 2006 Glyndebourne Festival, and »Parsifal« and »Die Meistersinger« from the Runfunk-Sinfonie Orchester Berlin with Marek Janowski.