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JAMES BAGWELL

Conductor



With performances described as “triumphant” (Tulsa World) and “galvanizing” (New York Classical Review), James Bagwell maintains an active schedule as a conductor of choral, orchestral, and opera repertoire.

From 2009-2015 he served as music director of The Collegiate Chorale. Highlights with the Chorale included conducting rarely performed operas at Carnegie Hall, including Bellini’s ***Beatrice di Tenda***, Rossini’s ***Möise et Pharaon***, and Boito’s ***Mefistofele***. He conducted the New York premiere of Philip Glass’s ***Toltec Symphony*** and Osvaldo Golijov’s ***Oceana*** at Carnegie Hall. His performance of Kurt Weill’s ***Knickerbocker Holiday*** at Alice Tully Hall was recorded live for Gaslight Records

and is the only complete recording of the work. Bagwell prepared the Chorale for numerous concerts at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and for programs with the Israel Philharmonic in Israel and the Salzburg Festival. Other performances include Glass’s ***Another Look at Harmony*** at the Park Avenue Armory and Poulenc’s ***Gloria*** at St. Bartholomew’s Church in New York. From 2005-2010 he was music director of The Dessoff Choirs in New York, who under his leadership made numerous appearances at Carnegie Hall in addition to their regular season.

A noted preparer of choruses, Bagwell prepared The Concert Chorale of New York for performances of Bernstein’s ***Kaddish Symphony*** for the New York Philharmonic and Brahms’s ***Ein Deutsches Requiem*** for Jaap Van Zweden’s inaugural season as the Philharmonic’s music director in 2019; this was followed in 2020 when he prepared Mozart’s ***C-minor Mass*** for the Philharmonic. Beginning in 2005, he regularly collaborated with the Mostly Mozart Festival with several performances broadcast nationally on ***Live from Lincoln Center***. In 2018 and 2019, he prepared performances for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and several concerts for Mostly Mozart, including Bernstein’s ***Mass***—all in David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center. As chorus master for The American Symphony Orchestra, he received accolades for his work on Luigi Nono’s ***Intolleranza*** at Carnegie Hall.

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Bagwell has trained choruses for other American and international orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, NHK Symphony (Japan), St. Petersburg Symphony, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. He has worked with such noted conductors as Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Andris Nelsons, Alan Gilbert, Gianandrea Noseda, Valery Gergiev, Yannik Nézet-Séguin, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Lorin Maazel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Louis Langrée, Leonard Slatkin, Leon Botstein, Ivan Fischer, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Raymond Leppard, James Conlon, Jesús López-Cobos, Erich Kunzel, Leon Fleischer, and Robert Shaw. Since 2003 he has been director of choruses for the Bard Music Festival, conducting and preparing choral works during the summer festival at The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College. Upcoming collaborations include preparing the Bard Festival Chorale for a performance of Bernstein's **Kaddish Symphony** with The Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall.

In 2015 Bagwell was named associate conductor of The Orchestra Now (TON), and in 2009 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. He has led both ensembles in concerts at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.

Bagwell is a regular guest conductor for the Tulsa Symphony, leading it in performances of Mozart's **Requiem** and Brahms's **Ein Deutsches Requiem**, returning in subsequent seasons to conduct Benjamin Britten's **War Requiem**, and Mahler's **First Symphony**. In January 2025 to lead them in rare performance of Carl Nielson's symphony **The Inextinguishable** and in May 2026 he will lead the orchestra in Mahler's **Second Symphony**. In 2011 and 2012 he conducted the Amici New York Orchestra at the OK Mozart Festival, and in December 2014 made his second appearance with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in a highly acclaimed performance of **Messiah**. He frequently appears as guest conductor for orchestras around the country and abroad, including the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, the Interlochen Music Festival, and the Jerusalem Symphony. His frequent appearances with the Berkshire Bach Orchestra and Chorus have been critically successful, exploring music from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Bagwell has collaborated since 2011 with singer and composer Natalie Merchant, conducting orchestras across the country, including the San Francisco, Seattle, Phoenix, and Nashville Symphonies. Over the last two years, they made appearances together with the Atlanta, Nashville, and Rhode Island Symphonies, and notably the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

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As music director of Light Opera Oklahoma, Bagwell conducted some twenty-five productions, including ***Die Fledermaus***, ***Sweeney Todd***, and ***The Merry Widow***, among others. At Bard SummerScape he has led various theatrical works, most notably Copland's ***The Tender Land***, which received glowing praise from *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *Opera News*. He led the Little Opera Theatre of New York's production of Rossini's ***Opportunity Makes the Thief***. In November 2021 he conducted a new production of ***L'amico Fritz*** for Teatro Grattacielo in New York. Other recent productions led by Bagwell include ***The Cunning Little Vixen***, ***Candide***, ***Iolanthe***, and ***Orpheus in the Underworld***.

James Bagwell holds degrees from Birmingham-Southern College, Florida State University, and Indiana University. He is Professor of Music and music program director at Bard College, and Director of Performance Studies in the Bard College Conservatory of Music. He serves as Co-Director of the Bard Conservatory Graduate Program in Conducting.