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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 orchestral, choral, and opera repertoire. In 2026 he was named principal conductor of the Tulsa Symphony and principal conductor of the Berkshire Bach Orchestra and Chorus. In 2009 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and six years later named associate conductor of The Orchestra Now (TON). He has led both ensembles in concerts at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York City.

Bagwell has been a regular guest conductor for the Tulsa Symphony since 2007, leading it in performances of Mozart’s *Requiem* and Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem*, returning in subsequent seasons to conduct Britten’s *War Requiem*, and Mahler’s First Symphony. In January 2025 he returned to conduct a rare performance of Carl Nielsen’s Symphony No. 4, “The Inextinguishable,” and in May 2026, Mahler’s Second Symphony, “Resurrection,” in celebration of their 20th anniversary.

Bagwell frequently appears as a guest conductor for orchestras around the country and abroad, including the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, the Interlochen Music Festival, and the Jerusalem Symphony. His regular appearances with the Berkshire Bach Orchestra and Chorus have been critically successful. In 2014 he made his second appearance with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in a highly acclaimed performance of Handel’s *Messiah*.

Since 2011 Bagwell has collaborated with the singer and composer Natalie Merchant, conducting orchestras across the country, including the Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Phoenix, Rhode Island, Las Vegas, Kansas City, Charleston, South Florida, and Nashville Symphonies, as well as Orchestra of St. Luke’s and the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

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As music director of Light Opera Oklahoma from 2000 to 2008, Bagwell conducted some twenty-five productions, including Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, and Lehár's *The Merry Widow*. He has conducted the Amici New York Orchestra at the OK Mozart Festival. At Bard SummerScape he has conducted several 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 2021 he conducted a new production of Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* for Teatro Grattacielo in New York. Other recent productions led by Bagwell include Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Bernstein's *Candide*, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*.

James Bagwell has served as the music director of several eminent choral groups. From 2005 to 2010 he led The Dessoff Choirs in New York, which under his leadership made appearances at Carnegie Hall in addition to their regular season. During his tenure with The Collegiate Chorale from 2009 to 2015 Bagwell conducted rarely performed operas at Carnegie Hall, including Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, Rossini's *Möise et Pharaon*, and Boito's *Mefistofele*, as well as the New York premiere of Philip Glass's *Toltec Symphony* and Osvaldo Golijov's *Oceana*. 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. He prepared the Collegiate Chorale for numerous concerts at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and for programs with the Israel Philharmonic in Israel and the Salzburg Festival.

In addition to his own choral ensembles, Bagwell is in great demand internationally as a celebrated preparer of choruses. He primed The Concert Chorale of New York for performances of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Mozart's C-minor Mass, and Bernstein's *Kaddish* Symphony for the New York Philharmonic. He has collaborated regularly with the Mostly Mozart Festival at David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, with some performances broadcast nationally on *Live from Lincoln Center*. In 2018 and 2019, he prepared performances for the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel. As the long-standing chorus master for the American Symphony Orchestra, he has prepared numerous rarely-performed choral works, including Ligeti's Requiem and Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder*. He received particular acclaim for his work on Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza* at Carnegie Hall.

Bagwell has trained choruses for numerous other American and international orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, San Francisco Symphony, NHK Symphony (Japan), St. Petersburg Symphony,

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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, Yuri Temirkanov, John Adams, and Robert Shaw. Since 2003, Bagwell has been director of choruses for the celebrated Bard Music Festival, preparing and conducting choral works during the summer festival at The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College.

In addition to his extensive activities as a conductor, James Bagwell has enjoyed a distinguished academic career. After earning degrees from Birmingham-Southern College, Florida State University, and his doctorate at Indiana University, he is now Professor of Music and director of the music program 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.