

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

# INNOVATION AND LEGACY

An Anniversary Celebration with  
Bard Conservatory Orchestra



CONDUCTED BY  
LEON BOTSTEIN AND TAN DUN

FISHER  
CENTER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2025 AT 7 PM  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2025 AT 2 PM  
SOSNOFF THEATER

Bard

Dear Friends,

This fall marks the twentieth anniversary of the founding of Bard's Conservatory of Music by Robert Martin and Leon Botstein. From its earliest days, the Conservatory has been guided by the belief that the finest training for young musicians goes beyond notes on the page, placing music within a broader social, cultural, and artistic context.

Our mission has always extended beyond the development of technical mastery and virtuosic skill—essential as those are—to cultivate musicians whose artistry engages deeply with the world around them. We are committed to honoring the great traditions of the past while fostering a vibrant, living present and future for this vital art form. At the heart of our work is the desire to create meaningful connections between musicians and audiences.

When the Conservatory first opened its doors, it welcomed 19 students from a handful of countries—all enrolled in the undergraduate double-degree program. Today, we are proud to have grown to 200 students representing 27 countries, enrolled across six undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

This performance is a celebration of that remarkable journey. Under the direction of President Botstein—who, this year, marks his fiftieth anniversary at Bard—and Conservatory Dean Tan Dun, you will hear music both new and old: music of today that speaks to the past, and music of the past that resonates in the present. On stage, you'll see and hear students, faculty, and alumni/ae who embody the spirit and mission of the Conservatory.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the many friends and supporters who have helped the Conservatory flourish over these past two decades. Thank you for joining us to celebrate this milestone and to share in the joy of music.

With appreciation,



Frank Corliss, Director  
Bard College Conservatory of Music

## **Bard College Conservatory of Music**

Tan Dun, *Dean*

Frank Corliss, *Director*

Presents

# **BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA**

**Conducted by Leon Botstein and Tan Dun**

Paulina Swierczek VAP '19, soprano

Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano

Jun Mo Yang VAP '24, tenor

Tyler Duncan, baritone

with Bard College Chorus and James Bagwell, Chorus Master

### **Tan Dun**

### ***Choral Concerto: Nine***

1. Nine

2. Wine

3. Time

Intermission

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

### **Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 (“Choral”)**

1. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso

2. Molto vivace

3. Adagio molto e cantabile

4. Finale

The Conservatory's 20th Anniversary programs are made possible in part by the generosity of Bindy and Stephen Kaye, Alan Hilliker and Vivien Liu, Y. S. Liu, Kornelia Tamm, and Eric Wong. Additional support is provided by Bard's Board of Trustees and the Advisory Board of the Conservatory.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

### ***Choral Concerto: Nine (2020–24)***

Tan Dun

Born in Simao, Hunan Province

In many of his compositions, including *Choral Concerto: Nine*, Tan Dun explores the intersection between East and West, which seems only natural given his background and education. He was born in China's Hunan Province and studied at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, before moving to New York City and earning a doctorate at Columbia University. Armed with expertise in both Chinese music and the Western classical tradition, he began to pursue projects around the world.

Some pieces not only imaginatively combine musical traditions but also explore new sonic realms through technology. Tan Dun's *2000 Today: A World Symphony for the Millennium* was internationally broadcast on New Year's Day in 2000, and his *Internet Symphony* (2009)—commissioned by Google and YouTube—has been heard by many millions online. His evocative film score for Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) won an Academy Award as well as a Grammy. Tan Dun has also written operas, including *Nine Songs* (1989); *Marco Polo* (1995); *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* (2002); *Buddha Passion* (2018), and *The First Emperor*, which premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 2006.

Tan Dun's accomplishments have been honored with a wide array of prestigious recognitions, including the Grawemeyer Award in 1998. In 2003, he was named *Musical America's* "Composer of the Year" and a decade later added the title of global Goodwill Ambassador for UNESCO in an inauguration at the organization's Paris headquarters on World Water Day. Tan Dun has been dean of the Bard College Conservatory of Music since 2019.

The impetus for *Choral Concerto: Nine* was a joint commission meant to mark the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the premiere, which led Tan Dun to expand his original concept into the three-movement work we hear today. He scored it for the same vocal, choral, and orchestral forces that Beethoven used in his Ninth Symphony, and the two pieces are meant to be programmed together. As it turned out, *Nine* premiered in 2024, the 200th anniversary of the premiere of Beethoven's Ninth, in Weikersheim. This small town in south-central Germany was the site of a summer festival in which nearly 200 musicians—ages 17 to 27, and from 41 countries—participated. After the premiere, Tan Dun and the young musicians took the work on a tour across Europe.

Tan Dun decided to create a dialogue between East and West not just on a musical level but also on a textual one. He juxtaposes ancient texts drawn from three Chinese

poets in the Taoist and Buddhist traditions with the famous words of Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy" that Beethoven uses in the last movement of his symphony. In addition, some words are only sounds: "empty words, no meaning," as marked in the score. The movements are titled "Nine," "Wine," and "Time"—all of which in Chinese are *Jiu*. The first movement is an allusion to the mysterious falling fifths that open Beethoven's symphony. The fast second movement has the feel of a scherzo and prominently features timpani, as Beethoven does in his scherzo. The final movement has a section marked "jazz style," which might be considered Tan Dun's contemporary take on the "Turkish" march Beethoven includes in his last movement. Tan Dun himself notes the following:

At the very beginning of the "Ode to Joy" in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Friedrich Schiller's words proclaim that all people are brothers and all creatures are together in this one world. The Chinese philosophers Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, from 2500 years ago, also said this very same thing and felt the same way. Thus, I feel a deep connection between Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Chinese philosophy.

I sought out different poets from different worlds and different points in history to form *Choral Concerto: Nine*. I used the poetry of Qu Yuan from 2400 years ago, perhaps some of the earliest ritual opera, where the music has been lost but the words remain. In my imaginings, I try to replace the music of this ancient poetry and lyric, bringing back what has vanished. Another poet I turned to is Li Bai, from 1300 years ago. His poetry about nature is so beautiful—describing the company of the moon amongst the shadows.

Human beings and nature have a deep connection, and I have always been fascinated by it: the lovemaking between the shadows, human beings, and the moon. I also use some words from Schiller and quote Beethoven's renowned "Ode to Joy"—to the creatures of nature, creatures of love, and creatures of our own mind.

However, throughout the work, many of the words that the chorus sings and chants are empty words. Some are from Taoist and Buddhist traditions and some are simply nonsense. "Empty" means everything. Nothing exists in an enduring manner. I find it very interesting to use the "emptiness" to represent "everything." Beethoven's Ninth Symphony reflects who we are as human beings and thus fulfills the shapeless space and complements the greatest sound in silence. That is why I thought using empty words in the chorus or the gesture of vocalizing to sing the choral concerto might be an interesting parallel to Beethoven.

In the last movement, “Time,” I ask myself: Why do we exist among the stone, among all kinds of nature? Is it not for peace? Why do we have to live? We all want to live the same way. In this movement, I hope to portray our responsibility to live in peace with nature and create peace amongst ourselves.

### **Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 (“Choral”) (1822–24)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, 1770

Died in Vienna, Austria, 1827

Throughout his career, Ludwig van Beethoven was a fervent believer in Enlightenment values and sought ways to express this in many of his compositions. One of the reasons for the broad and sustained appeal of his Ninth Symphony is that people enjoying or seeking freedom see the work as exquisitely expressing a message they wish to proclaim loudly. That message is simple, one we learn as children: People should live together in joyous brotherhood.

As a child of the Enlightenment, Beethoven grew up during the American and French revolutions. He followed political events throughout his life and experienced war close hand when Napoleon Bonaparte’s troops invaded Vienna in 1805 and 1809. His first large-scale composition, written at the age of 19, was an impressive cantata commemorating the death of Emperor Joseph II, who had done so much to liberalize the Habsburg monarchy during the early 1780s. Years later, Beethoven wrote his lone opera, *Fidelio*, which tells the story of a loving woman’s brave efforts to save her husband, an unjustly jailed political prisoner. Through her heroic deeds, he is rescued and tyranny exposed.

For his final symphony, Beethoven turned to a lengthy poem by Friedrich Schiller that he had long wanted to set to music: *An die Freude* or “Ode to Joy” (1785). Schiller’s famous words state that in a new age the old ways will no longer divide people; “all men shall become brothers.” Since the premiere of the Ninth Symphony in Vienna in May 1824, performances of the work have become almost sacramental occasions, as musicians and audiences alike are exhorted to universal fraternity.

On a musical level, few pieces have exerted such an impact on later composers. How, many wondered, should one write a symphony after the Ninth? Franz Schubert, Hector Berlioz, Johannes Brahms, Richard Wagner, Anton Bruckner—the list goes on—all dealt with this question in fascinating ways that fundamentally shaped 19th-century music. Schubert, who most likely attended the 1824 premiere, briefly quoted the “joy” theme in his own final symphony, written the following year. Most of Bruckner’s symphonies

begin in the mysteriously evocative manner of the Ninth. Felix Mendelssohn, Gustav Mahler, and Dmitri Shostakovich followed the model of enlisting a chorus. Wagner was perhaps the composer most influenced, co-opting the work to argue that, in it, Beethoven pointed the way to the “Music of the Future”—a universal drama uniting music and words that, in short, was realized in Wagner’s own operas.

Composers are not the only people who have been deeply engaged with the Ninth and struggle with its import and meaning. The work has been appropriated for widely diverse purposes, surfacing at crucial times and places for nearly two centuries. As the ultimate “feel-good” piece, the Ninth has been used to open the Olympic Games and bring nations together in song. Yet, during the Nazi era, it was performed to celebrate Adolf Hitler’s birthday. Its melody is the official anthem of the European Union—but it was also the anthem of Ian Smith’s racist regime in Rhodesia during the 1970s.

In more recent memory, protesters played recordings of the Ninth in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and jubilant students chose it as a theme song when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Commemorative performances took place in the wake of 9/11, where the Ninth was once again enlisted for its hopeful message. And just over five years ago, the work was reimagined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even with all the health protocols, classical musicians—amateurs and professionals alike—found ways to make a joyful noise. Impromptu choruses sang the “Ode to Joy” from balconies in Italy, and orchestras, choruses, and soloists engineered impressive collaborative feats with musicians playing individually in isolation and imaginatively figuring out technological ways to weave together a full ensemble.

In a penetrating essay, “Resisting the Ninth,” music historian Richard Taruskin pointed to ways in which some musicians and listeners have resisted the Ninth Symphony, embarrassed by what they consider its naive optimism. This symphony, Taruskin states, “is among connoisseurs preeminently the Piece You Love to Hate, no less now than a century and a half ago. Why? Because it is at once incomprehensible and irresistible, and because it is at once awesome and naive.”

Those who revere the Ninth Symphony may be surprised to hear that some have ever resisted it. Undoubtedly, the message has been somewhat neutered by trivializations in movies and TV commercials, and often treated by musicians in purely musical terms rather than in humanistic ones. For some modern listeners, Taruskin argues, its message may be difficult to take seriously anymore: “We have our problems with demagogues who preach to us about the brotherhood of man. We have been too badly burned by those who have promised Elysium and given us gulags and gas chambers.” Yet Beethoven understood that great works of art matter, in part because they constitute a threat to tyrants. Beethoven strove for ways to express a deeply-felt political vision.

The opening of the first movement grows out of a void. Against the murmurings of the low strings emerge falling fifths in the violins that build to a loud and imposing first theme. It has been likened to the creation of the world; no symphony before sounded anything like it. Beethoven reversed the expected order of movements (another feature later composers would imitate) by following with a scherzo. A favorite with audiences from the beginning (especially the prominent role given to the timpani), it projects both humor and power. The lyrical slow movement seems to explore more personal, even spiritual realms.

The finale opens with what Wagner called the “terror fanfare,” a dissonant and frantic passage that leads to a “recitative” (so marked in the score) for the cellos and basses. Fragments from the previous three movements pass in review—a few measures of the opening theme of each—but are in turn rejected by the strings. After this strange, extended instrumental recitative comes an aria-like melody: the famous “Ode to Joy” tune to which words will later be added. After some seven minutes, the movement starts over again; the “terror fanfare” returns, this time followed by a true vocal recitative with the bass soloist singing, “O friends, not these tones! But rather, let us strike up more pleasant and more joyful ones.” (The words for these two lines were written by Beethoven, not Schiller.) The chorus and four vocal soloists take up the “joy” theme, which undergoes a series of variations (including a brief section in the Turkish manner, with cymbals, triangle, drum, piccolo, and trumpets). The music reaches a climax with a new theme: “Be embraced, ye millions . . . above the starry canopy there must dwell a loving Father”—which is later combined in counterpoint with the joy theme and eventually builds to a frenzied coda.

—Christopher H. Gibbs, *James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music*

## TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

### Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125 (“Choral”)

#### “Ode to Joy”

(Friedrich Schiller)

#### Bass

*O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!  
Sondern lasst uns angenehmere  
anstimmen, und freudenvollere.*

O friends, not these tones!  
But rather, let us strike up  
more pleasant and more joyful ones.

#### Bass and Chorus

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,  
Tochter aus Elysium,  
wir betreten feuertrunken,  
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!  
Deine Zauber binden wieder,  
was die Mode streng geteilt;  
alle Menschen werden Brüder  
wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.*

Joy, thou lovely spark of the gods,  
daughter of Elysium;  
drunk with fire, we tread  
thy holy realm, O heavenly one!  
Thy magic joins again  
that which custom has torn apart;  
all men become brothers  
wherever thy gentle wings are spread.

*Wem der grosse Wurf gelungen,  
eines Freundes Freund zu sein,  
wer ein holdes Weib errungen,  
mische seinen Jubel ein!  
Ja, wer auch nur eine Seele  
sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!  
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle,  
weinend sich aus diesem Bund!*

He who has had the great fortune  
of being a friend's friend,  
he who has won a gracious wife,  
let him join the celebration!  
Yes, even he who can call  
only one soul on earth his own!  
And let the one who could never do this  
steal from our midst in tears!

*Freude trinken alle Wesen  
an den Brüsten der Natur;  
alle Guten, alle Bösen  
folgen ihrer Rosenspur.  
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,  
einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;  
Wollust war dem Wurm gegeben,  
und der Cherub steht vor Gott.*

All living beings drink joy  
at Nature's breast;  
all good things, all evil things  
walk her rose-strewn path.  
She gave us kisses, she gave us vines,  
she gave us a friend true to the grave;  
wantonness was given to the worm,  
and the cherub stands before God.

### Tenor and Chorus

*Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen  
durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,  
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,  
freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.*

Happily, as his suns fly  
across heaven's magnificent expanse,  
brothers, run your course  
joyfully, like a hero to victory.

### Chorus

*Seid umschlungen, Millionen!  
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!  
Brüder über'm Sternenzelt  
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.*

Be embraced, ye millions!  
This kiss goes to all the world!  
Brothers, above the starry canopy  
there must dwell a loving Father.

*Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?  
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?  
Such' ihm über'm Sternenzelt,  
über Sternen muss er wohnen.*

Do you fall prostrate, O millions?  
Do you worship the Creator, O world?  
Look for Him above the starry canopy;  
he must live above the stars.

*Translation by Paul J. Horsley*

### BIOGRAPHIES

In addition to serving as music director of the Bard Conservatory Orchestra, **Leon Botstein** is music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO), founder and music director of The Orchestra Now (TÖN), coartistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, and principal guest conductor of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra (JSO), where he served as music director from 2003 to 2011. He has been guest conductor with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Aspen Music Festival, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre, Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, Bamberg Symphony, Taipei Symphony, and Sinfónica Juvenil de Caracas in Venezuela, among others. Recordings include a Grammy-nominated recording of Gavrili Popov's First Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra, acclaimed recordings of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* with the ASO, and Othmar Schoeck's *Lebendig begraben* with TÖN, as well as recordings with the NDR Orchestra Hamburg and the BBC Orchestra. Additional recordings with TÖN feature *Ries: Piano Concertos Nos. 8 & 9* and *Rubbra & Bliss: Piano Concertos* on Hyperion Records; *Piano Protagonists: Music for Piano and Orchestra* and *Classics of American Romanticism* on Bridge Records; and *The Lost Generation: Apostel • Kauder • Busch* and *Exodus: Kaufmann • Rubin • Tal* on AVIE Records. He is editor of *The Musical Quarterly* and of *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton). At the invitation of the City of Nuremberg, TÖN traveled to Germany with an all-Mendelssohn program for a commemorative concert on May 8, 2025, marking the 80th anniversary of the Allied victories in Europe in 1945.

World-renowned conductor, composer, and UNESCO Global Goodwill Ambassador **Tan Dun** has made an indelible mark on the world's music scene with a creative repertoire that spans the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. Often programmed by the world's leading orchestras, opera houses, festivals, and broadcasters, Tan Dun's music has been played by the likes of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra, China National Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and many more.

Recent seasons have seen Tan Dun conduct the world premiere of his *Requiem for Nature* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; the UK premiere of his *Buddha Passion* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and various programs with the Munich Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, among others; as well as open the Edinburgh International Festival with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and tour with the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

As a composer, Tan Dun's individuality has struck a chord with audiences far and wide. His *Internet Symphony*, commissioned by Google and YouTube, reached tens of millions of online listeners. His Organic Music Trilogy of concertos—*Water*, *Paper*, and *Earth*—have frequented major concert venues since their conception; *Paper Concerto*, in particular, was premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the opening of Walt Disney Hall. Other works, including *The Map* and *Orchestral Theatre IV: The Gate*, have been premiered by prestigious orchestras such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra and NHK Symphony Orchestra.

With his penchant for artistic curation, Tan Dun is in high international demand. He currently serves as dean of Bard College Conservatory of Music, honorary artistic director of the China National Symphony Orchestra, principal guest conductor of Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, honorary artistic director and chief guest conductor of Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, and artistic ambassador of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

In 2023, Tan Dun signed with Decca Records, who released the world-premiere recording of *Buddha Passion*. Previously, Tan Dun recorded for Sony Classical, Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Opus Arte, BIS, and Naxos. His discography has received regular acclaim from critics and audiences alike, including the 2001 Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*).

Lauded for her “exceptional voice, cloudless and soaring,” and her “killer side-eye,” soprano **Paulina Swierczek** is a vibrant storyteller. Concert highlights include Handel's *Messiah* with the Alabama Symphony Orchestra; Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Andris Nelsons; Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and Mozart's *Dauid penitente* with the Broad Street Orchestra; and Richard Strauss's *Four Songs*, Op. 27, with The Orchestra Now under Leon Botstein. Swierczek is an alumna of the Tanglewood Music Center, Meistersinger Program at Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar, and SongFest. Swierczek was a prize winner of the 2023 Opera Birmingham Vocal Competition. As a Des Moines Metro Opera (DMMO) Apprentice Artist (2024–25), Swierczek covered Senta in Richard Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* and Berta in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. Swierczek made her DMMO mainstage debut as Chocholka in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* in the 2025 season. She looks forward to debuting with the Woodstock Symphony Orchestra in spring 2026, singing the title role in Act 1 of Verdi's *La traviata*.

A renowned opera singer and recitalist, mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** is one of the most highly respected and critically acclaimed artists of her generation. With repertoire that ranges from Handel to Wagner, German lieder to contemporary and classic American song, she feels at home equally on opera, concert, recital, and

cabaret stages. She has performed in many world-class venues like Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, Paris National Opera, and the San Francisco, Chicago Lyric, and Seattle Operas, and with orchestras that include the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Opera Orchestra of New York, Minnesota Orchestra, Halle Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Ensemble Orchestre de Paris, and the Concertgebouworkest. She has also appeared at the Tanglewood, Cincinnati May, and Ravinia festivals, and at the BBC Proms.

Ms. Blythe's many operatic roles include title roles in *Carmen*, *Samson et Dalila*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *La Grande Duchesse*, *Tancredi*, *Mignon*, and *Giulio Cesare*; Frugola, Principessa, and Zita in *Il Trittico*, Fricka in both *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*, Ježibaba in *Rusalka*, Madame de Haltiere in *Cendrillon*, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, and Ino/Juno in *Semele*. She also created the role of Gertrude Stein in Ricky Ian Gordon's *27* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and performed Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* at the San Francisco Opera and Nettie Fowler in *Carousel* at the Houston Grand Opera and with the New York Philharmonic. More recently, she has expanded her repertoire to include nontraditional casting as the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* with San Diego Opera, and Don Jose in *Carmen* with Chicago Opera Theater.

Ms. Blythe was named *Musical America's* Vocalist of the Year in 2009, received an *Opera News* Award in 2007, and won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award in 1999. In 2019, she had the honor of being appointed director of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program at Bard College. Most recently, she was the recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award by the Longy School of Music of Bard College. She occasionally moonlights as dramatic tenor Blythely Oratonio.

Korean American tenor **Jun Mo Yang** has been praised for his “mesmerizing melodic voice” (*The Millbrook Independent*). His repertoire spans Baroque to Romantic works, alongside contemporary compositions by living and underrepresented composers. He has premiered music by Juliana Hall and Austrian composer Albin Fries, and also explores Korean art songs, weaving his cultural heritage into his artistry. Recent performances include soloist engagements in Mozart's *Requiem* and *Dauid penitente*, as well as Orphée in Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* with the Bard Graduate Vocal Arts Program. Based in New York City, Yang earned his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and MM from the Bard College Conservatory of Music Graduate Vocal Arts Program. He has performed in operas, recitals, and festivals across the Northeast, and also serves as a production assistant and stage manager with Bard SummerScape.

With a voice described as “honey-coloured and warm, yet robust and commanding” (*The Globe and Mail*), baritone **Tyler Duncan** has performed worldwide to great acclaim and with orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and Kansas City Symphony. He recently returned to the Metropolitan Opera for the new production of Blanchard's *Champion* after his previous roles as Prince Yamadori in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, The Journalist in Berg's *Lulu*, and Fiorello in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, and performed in the world premiere of Berger's *Leonardo* at New York's 92nd Street Y. Other recent roles include Count Almaviva in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* with Pacific Opera Victoria and Amarillo Opera; Morales in Bizet's *Carmen* under Seiji Ozawa; Raymond in Gotham's *Nigredo Hotel* with City Opera Vancouver; and, at the Spoleto Festival, the Speaker in Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Mr. Friendly in the 18th-century ballad opera *Flora*. Skilled in the Baroque style, Duncan has also appeared with Les Violons du Roy, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Early Music Vancouver, Music of the Baroque, Handel and Haydn Chorus, and in the Boston Early Music and Oregon Bach Festivals.

Duncan has given acclaimed international recitals alongside pianist Erica Switzer, and the duo released two albums for Bridge Records—*English Songs à la française* and *A Left Coast*. Duncan's other recordings include Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* with Peter Oundjian and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, which won the 2019 JUNO Award; the title role in John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* with Boston Early Music Festival; and a DVD of Handel's *Messiah* with Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. His singing has been recognized with Grammy nominations as well as prizes from the Naumburg, Wigmore Hall, and ARD competitions, and he is a faculty member of Bard Conservatory's Vocal Arts Program.

**James Bagwell** maintains an active schedule as a conductor of choral, orchestral, and opera repertoire. In 2015 he was named associate conductor of The Orchestra Now (TÖN), and in 2009 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra (ASO). From 2009–15, he served as music director of The Collegiate Chorale. Highlights with the chorale included conducting rarely performed operas at Carnegie Hall, such as Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, Rossini's *Möise et Pharaon*, and Boito's *Mefistofele*. He conducted the New York premiere of Glass's *Toltec Symphony* and Golijov's *Oceana* at Carnegie Hall. His performance of 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 Chorale for numerous concerts at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and for programs with the Israel Philharmonic in Israel and the Salzburg Festival. He has collaborated since 2011 with singer and composer Natalie Merchant, conducting orchestras across the country, including the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center.

Bagwell is a regular guest conductor for the Tulsa Symphony (TSO), leading it in performances of Requiems by Mozart, Brahms, and Britten, as well as Mahler's First Symphony. In January 2025, he led a rare performance of Nielson's symphony *The Inextinguishable*, and, in May 2026, he will conduct Mahler's Second Symphony in celebration of the TSO's 25th anniversary season.

A noted preparer of choruses, Bagwell has trained choruses for numerous American and international orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, NHK Symphony (Japan), St. Petersburg Symphony, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. As chorus master for the ASO, he has received numerous accolades for his collaborations with Leon Botstein performing rare choral works at Carnegie Hall. Since 2003, he has been director of choruses for the Bard Music Festival, conducting and preparing choral works.

Bagwell is professor of music at Bard College, director of performance studies in the Bard College Conservatory of Music, and codirector of the Graduate Conducting Program.

#### **BARD CONSERVATORY GRADUATE VOCAL ARTS PROGRAM**

The Graduate Vocal Arts Program is a unique master of music program in vocal repertory and expressive techniques with the flexibility and curiosity needed to keep abreast of evolving musical ideas. Led by the renowned American mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, the program prepares young singers to meet the specific challenges of pursuing a professional life in music in the 21st century. Students engage with art song, chamber music, contemporary music, and operatic repertoire throughout their coursework. Operatic performance includes a fully staged production at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts. The program includes seminars and classes in Alexander Technique, acting, diction and translation, development of performance opportunities, and a workshop in career skills with guest speakers who are leading figures in arts management and administration.

#### **BARD COLLEGE CHAMBER SINGERS**

Formed in 2002 by music director James Bagwell, Bard College Chamber Singers is an auditioned choir of Bard students and alumni/ae from all programs of the College. The Chamber Singers have performed with the Bard Baroque Ensemble and in concerts of Haydn's Mass in D Minor and works by Mahler, Fauré, Kodály, and Baltas. In past holiday seasons, they joined the Bard College Symphonic Chorus and members of TÖN as well as the Bard Conservatory and Community orchestras to perform at Bard's Winter Songfest.

## BARD CONSERVATORY ORCHESTRA

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Kai O'Donnell, *Principal*<sup>2</sup>

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Andrew Watkins, *Assistant Oboe*<sup>2</sup>

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Founded in 2005, the Bard College Conservatory of Music offers a unique five-year, double-degree program at the undergraduate level, integrating rigorous musical training with a liberal arts education. Graduate programs include vocal arts, conducting, instrumental performance, and Chinese music and culture, along with Advanced Performance Studies and a Collaborative Piano Fellowship. The Conservatory's US-China Music Institute, formed in 2017, offers the only degree programs in Chinese instrument performance in the Western Hemisphere.

The Bard Conservatory Orchestra has performed at Lincoln Center, toured internationally to China, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Cuba, and in collaboration with the Bard Prison Initiative presents annual performances at NY-area prisons.

The Conservatory enrolls more than 200 students from 27 countries and 35 states.

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Through Fisher Center LAB, the Center's acclaimed residency and commissioning program, artists are provided with custom-made support toward their innovative projects; their work has been seen in over 100 communities around the world. Resident choreographer Pam Tanowitz's 2018 *Four Quartets* was recognized as "the most important work of dance theater so far this century" by *The New York Times*. In 2019 the Fisher Center won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical for Daniel Fish's production of *Oklahoma!*, which began life in 2007 as an undergraduate production at Bard and was produced professionally by the Fisher Center in 2015 before transferring to New York City. *Illinois*, a 2023 Fisher Center world premiere from artists Sufjan Stevens, Justin Peck, and Jackie Sibblies Drury, was recognized with a Tony Award for Best Choreography following its tour and transfer to Broadway.

### **BARD COLLEGE**

Founded in 1860, Bard College is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place and Massena properties, Bard's campus consists of more than 1,200 parklike acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with majors in nearly 40 academic programs; advanced degrees through 13 graduate programs; 10 early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 165-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to liberal arts education. The undergraduate program at the main campus in upstate New York has a reputation for scholarly excellence, a focus on the arts, and civic engagement. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit [bard.edu](http://bard.edu).

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