

JAMES BONAS

DIRECTOR

‘The evening promised to be flamboyant, energetic, even sparkling: it is all of that and more’

Classic News, Company, Génération Opéra

James Bonas is a traditional storyteller for the modern age, combining imagination and intellect with a curiosity for technology and new forms, whether directing classical or contemporary theatre, opera, or dance. He read Psychology and Philosophy at Oxford University, prior to training as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London and developing his career as a director.

Recent opera work includes new productions of Massenet’s *Manon* for Theater Magdeburg, *Die Zauberflöte* for Göteborgs Operan and Sondheim’s *Company* for Génération Opéra, which concludes an extensive tour of France with performances this season at Grand Théâtre de Genève and Théâtre du Châtelet. Other productions include the world premiere of Isabelle Albouker’s *L’Archipel(s)* with La Maîtrise de L’Opéra Comique and *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Magdeburg.

Bonas enjoys longstanding creative partnerships, among them with animator Grégoire Pont. Their work together includes *Candide* for Welsh National Opera, the French premiere of Abrahamsen’s *The Snow Queen* for Opéra national du Rhin (winner of the French critics’ Best Scenic Elements/Scenography award 2022), as well as Orff’s *Der Mond* and Ravel’s *L’heure espagnole* and *L’enfant et les sortilèges* for Opéra de Lyon.

In dance, he enjoys partnerships with choreographers such as Helen Pickett and Sophie Laplane. His most recent projects with Pickett include *Lady Macbeth* for Dutch National Ballet, *Crime and Punishment* for American Ballet Theater, *Emma Bovary* for Canadian National Ballet and *The Crucible* for Scottish National Ballet – an award-winning narrative ballet that premiered at Edinburgh International Festival, with further runs at Sadler’s Wells, London, Kennedy Center in Washington DC and Nashville, Tennessee. With Laplane he created the highly acclaimed *Mary, Queen of Scots* for Scottish Ballet, performed at the 2025 International Edinburgh Festival, and which continues to tour across the UK and US. During lockdown, they created the short film *Dive* for Scottish Ballet, which featured in dance film festivals worldwide, including the 2021 Venice Biennale, and won the Grand Jury Prize at Cinedans 2022.

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MAESTRO_{ARTS}

As an advocate for multi-disciplinary performance, Bonas constantly looks for new possibilities for musical storytelling. He develops original projects from first ideas to performance, creating concepts, storylines and new works in collaboration with composers, choreographers and performers. His most recent production, *UnRavelled*, intertwines the lives of scientist and painter Anne Adams and composer Maurice Ravel, and explores the effects of the type of dementia they both suffered. The production is currently touring the US, supporting a national initiative to combat the disease.

Bonas also brings his narrative skills to reimagine the concert format. He regularly stages performances at the BBC Proms: he has directed theatrical concerts with Aurora Orchestra (including Mahler's *Symphony no.1*, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Shostakovich's *Symphony no.5*), as well as Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* with Hebrides Ensemble at Drill Hall, Lincoln, and *Glass Handel*, a collaboration with Anthony Roth-Costanzo and English National Opera at Print Works. His recent theatrical performance of *Tosca* with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra received excellent reviews that remarked on the clarity of his interpretation.