

Presented at Carnegie Hall by



Friday, January 30, 2026 at 8 PM  
Isaac Stern Auditorium / Ronald O. Perelman Stage

# Forging an American Musical Identity

**Leon Botstein**, Conductor

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DUDLEY BUCK

*Festival Overture on the American National Air*

arr. HARRY T.  
BURLEIGH

“Go Down, Moses”  
“Behold that Star!”  
“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

**J’Nai Bridges**, Mezzo-Soprano

RICHARD WAGNER

*Großer Festmarsch (American Centennial March)*

INTERMISSION

GEORGE FREDERICK  
BRISTOW

Symphony No. 5, Op. 62, “Niagara”  
I. Allegro  
II. Andante  
III. Scherzo  
IV. Maestoso—Allegro—Andante—Allegro—  
Andante—Allegro furioso

**Anna Thompson**, Soprano  
**J’Nai Bridges**, Mezzo-Soprano  
**Freddie Ballentine**, Tenor  
**Alan Williams**, Bass

**Bard Festival Chorale**  
**James Bagwell**, Director

**Performance Time:** approximately two hours and 20 minutes,  
including one 20-minute intermission

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**Conductor’s Notes Q&A with Leon Botstein at 7 PM**

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# From the Music Director

The history of classical music for the concert hall and the opera stage in the US mirrors the complex crosscurrents and tensions that have characterized the history of the nation since its founding in 1776.

The “New World,” the land on which the US was established, was neither new nor uninhabited when Europeans arrived between the end of the 15th century and transformed 13 English colonies into a new nation during the last decades of the 18th. The English, French, and Spanish arrived in the Western Hemisphere as conquerors and colonists. They encountered diverse and thriving Indigenous populations and their cultures. Estimates vary, but there were probably 50 million Indigenous people living in North America when the European migration began. Disease and violent conflict with the European newcomers radically reduced that number by the end of the 19th century by an astonishing 90 percent.

The European settlement of North America also brought with it the slave trade from Africa. Black slaves made up one fifth of the population in 1776. By 1790, there were 700,000 Black slaves, 18 percent of the new nation’s population. When the Civil War broke out in 1860, the country had four million Black slaves and 500,000 free Black Americans.

We need to be reminded of these facts since they tend to be overlooked and forgotten when the history of the US is told. We prefer to focus on how the US, before and after the Civil War, grew dramatically as a nation of immigrants, first from the British Isles then from continental Europe, particularly German-speaking Europe. A European cultural heritage maintained an allure and exerted a powerful influence not only on immigrants but on their descendants over several generations. At the same time, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed in the 1830s, Americans with roots in Europe quickly developed their own habits, mores, patriotic sensibilities, and pride in qualities they deemed unique, ranging from “rugged individualism” and “self-reliance,” to a distinct commitment to democratic values and practices, eloquently articulated by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, as government “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Nevertheless, the European heritage continued, throughout the 19th century, to loom large in the consciousness of Americans, bolstered by successive waves of immigrants and continuing ties to the “Old World.”

It should come therefore as no surprise that for the centennial celebration of the founding of the American Republic in 1876, during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, a lavish commission was given to Richard Wagner, arguably then the most famous living European composer, to write a work celebrating the historic milestone of America’s founding. In his outstanding notes for this concert, Daniel Goldmark notes that those who organized the Wagner

commission also sought to promote music written by American composers. However, most American composers who achieved prominence during the years between the end of the Civil War and the US' entrance into World War I went to Europe for their training. This includes John Knowles Paine (for whom Wagner was anathema), Horatio Parker, George Chadwick, and Edward MacDowell, though not George Frederick Bristow and Harry T. Burleigh.

Nonetheless, although he was born in America and made his career here, George Frederick Bristow remained indebted, as Goldmark points out, in his compositions to European practices and models. The concert repertoire in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia during his lifetime was nearly exclusively European. At the same time, Bristow and his contemporary American-born composers sought to find ways to distinguish themselves from the European and evoke, through music, the spirit, populace, landscape, and history of the nation. That was certainly true for Dudley Buck, whose overture on what has become our national anthem opens the concert. Bristow was a tireless and outspoken advocate of American composers and musicians. His career was an astonishing combination of performance, composition, teaching, and organizational leadership.

Bristow's efforts notwithstanding, Americans, in terms of concert music and opera, remained deferential to Europe for the duration of the 19th century. When Carnegie Hall opened in 1891, Tchaikovsky was invited from Russia to mark its debut. When a national conservatory was founded in New York in 1892, the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák was recruited to lead it. But Dvořák's arrival resulted in the unexpected. Dvořák admonished Americans to look to their own unique history and cultural resources, particularly those of the Indigenous nations and the descendants of slaves. He argued against a reliance on European models. In his view, the two facets of American history—its Indigenous cultural heritage and that of Black Americans—could contribute to making American music original and distinct. Harry T. Burleigh was one of Dvořák's protégés. Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, William Arms Fisher, Rubin Goldmark (who taught Aaron Copland and George Gershwin), and Arthur Farwell (who did not study with Dvořák and trained in part in Europe to become the leading advocate of the Indigenous American heritage) were each influenced by Dvořák's advocacy of uniquely American sources in music. Dvořák's admonition was prescient and inspired the flowering of a distinct American repertoire during the 20th century that has continued in the 21st.

With Buck and Bristow's music, this concert by the ASO celebrates an overlooked dimension in the history of American music, one more directly reliant on European trends and that saw its heyday during the last quarter of the 19th century. The centennial celebrations, America's industrial expansion and a triumphalism linked to the popular but controversial myth of "manifest destiny" that morally justified America's superiority in the decades prior to (and after) Dvořák's arrival in the early 1890s encouraged a highly charged romantic musical expressiveness. This concert features the first complete performance (and only the second performance of any sort)

of the last major composition by Bristow, who had established himself as the leading American symphonic composer before the subsequent generation of Paine (who was 14 years younger) and Chadwick (who was nearly 30 years younger). Bristow sought a synthesis between an American sensibility and European precedents in compositional practice, particularly those of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. The “Niagara” symphony on the program is therefore more a valedictory to the 19th century than a harbinger of the culture and temperament of the 20th century. It is a monument in music to a nationalist American musical culture more akin to a post 1848 European musical late romantic nationalism best represented by Wagner. The American version of that movement in music is now largely forgotten and ignored. Only Burleigh’s music points to the novel differentiated cultural trends anticipated by Dvořák, (including experimental modernism), that would prevail in American music during the 20th century.

This program of Bristow, Burleigh, and a rarely performed work by Wagner was designed also to pay homage to the history and mission of the American Symphony Orchestra. The ASO was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski. Stokowski was a consummate showman, a fine organist and legendary conductor who made his career on the podium as an advocate of contemporary music, the art of transcription, brilliant, freewheeling interpretations, and a unique and lush orchestral sound. He sought to render past repertoire contemporary and reimagine classical music for a growing mass audience in an era of new technologies of sound reproduction and the moving image with sound. His most enduring achievement may be *Fantasia*, the Disney film from 1940 made up of animated visual narratives set to iconic works from the classical repertoire. *Fantasia* was conceived and conducted by Stokowski, narrated by Deems Taylor, an American composer who had achieved, briefly, considerable success (and whose operas were performed at the Metropolitan Opera). Taylor was actually more famous as a popular commentator and proselytizer of music.

Stokowski emigrated in 1905 to the US from England to take a post at St. Bartholomew’s in New York. He quickly became an American idol and icon. In 1962, the octogenarian Stokowski sought to advance the cause of classical music in America by founding an orchestra, resident in Carnegie Hall (which the New York Philharmonic left for the then brand-new Lincoln Center), made up exclusively by American musicians, mostly young and trained in the US. Stokowski’s most memorable ASO concert was the posthumous premiere of Charles Ives’s Fourth Symphony in 1965.

Stokowski’s mission for the ASO was to offer concerts at affordable prices, feature less well-known repertoire, past and present (particularly from the Western Hemisphere), and perform new music. In the years since his retirement from the ASO in 1972, when he returned to England, the ASO has sought to sustain his vision. This concert pays homage to Stokowski. Its program emulates his leadership in contribution to the life of American music.

—Leon Botstein

# The Program

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**DUDLEY BUCK** (1839–1909)

*Festive Overture on the American National Air* (1879)

**Premiere:** July 4, 1879 at Manhattan Beach, Coney Island, New York

**Instruments for This Performance:** 2 flutes, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion, strings, and chorus

A native of Hartford, Connecticut, Dudley Buck taught himself to play the flute by the age of 12, and quickly moved on to the organ after his parents realized they could not dissuade him from a career in music. After two years of music study at Trinity College in Hartford, he went at age 19 to Leipzig, learning from Ernst Richter, Moritz Hauptmann, and Ignaz Moscheles, among others, and was classmates with Edvard Grieg. He continued his organ studies in Dresden and then Paris before returning to Hartford in 1862, where he made a career as a touring concert organist. Buck eventually ended up as the assistant conductor for the Theodore Thomas Orchestra in New York, following a two-year stay in Chicago that ended abruptly after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and then several years in Boston, where he taught at the New England Conservatory.

Buck's name was catapulted into public recognition by his involvement in one of the biggest concerts then ever mounted. Bandleader Patrick Gilmore had already organized the National Peace Jubilee in 1869 in celebration of the end of the American Civil War, which involved more than 1,000 instrumentalists and more than 10,000 singers. He followed this with an even more gargantuan event, the World's Peace Jubilee and International Musical Festival in Boston's Back Bay in June 1872, again with close to 1,000 instrumentalists and 17,282 choristers from 165 choral groups, for which Buck was commissioned to write the words and music for the event's "Festival Hymn." Less than four years passed before he received the commission for the Philadelphia Centennial Celebration, writing *The Centennial Meditation of Columbia*, with words by Sidney Lanier. Assisted by the organ inside the Centennial Festival's main building, which could be heard through open windows, and with the support of the 1,000 singers present, Buck's *Meditation* was a huge success, so much so that *The New York Times* reviewer praised his cantata.

The piece on tonight's program was another commission from Gilmore, in this case to celebrate the Fourth of July by using "The Star-Spangled Banner." Buck had already created one piece using the theme of the "Banner": his *Concert Variations on "The Star-Spangled Banner"* for organ, composed and first performed on the heels of the Civil War, in 1866. Theme and variation sets were extraordinarily popular in the 19th century, and made use of popular songs, folk songs, national themes, and just about

anything else melodic and en vogue. For instance, one of the first American composers of the 19th century, Bohemian émigré Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861), wrote the ultimate—bordering on outrageous—exploration of a folk melody with his *Yankee Doodleiad* (1820), an extraordinary theme and variations set on “Yankee Doodle” (another song competing with “Hail Columbia” as the unofficial anthem of the US), including an entire statement of the tune in which the violinist is instructed to play every note with a trill. Not everyone was a fan of variation forms; a letter to the editor of *Dwight’s Journal of Music* in 1853 from the point of view of the song “Yankee Doodle” gives a comic reading of the situation; in part: “Why is it, sir, when one of your ... bewhiskered fancy fiddlers, has tickled his audience with his capering fingers, till they call him out again—why is it that I am to be dragged out and tortured for an encore! What have I done to be served up so—Yankee Doodle, with variations! Sir, I am not played—I am shamefully played with, smothered in ‘ornaments,’ strangled, bedeviled, fiddle-de-deed to death! Sir, I do not deserve this ... Yes, sir, me—Yankee Doodle—the National Anthem of this great Republic—me they put through such shameful antics, as if I were a dancing dog, or an organ-grinder’s monkey!”

Buck provides in the *Festival Overture* (1879) a novel group of variations on the familiar theme (which, incidentally, wouldn’t be “officially” adopted as the national anthem by the US government until 1931; this is why Buck refers to the “Banner” as the “American National Air”). In addition to the original orchestration, Patrick Gilmore used a band arrangement of the *Overture* in numerous summer performances at Coney Island; the piece was also taken on the road throughout the US and Europe by Texas-born conductor Frank Van der Stucken, who would invite audiences (via a note in the printed program) to sing a single verse of the anthem at the appointed moment. It was during one of Van der Stucken’s tours that Buck’s *Overture* became a representative work at the “American Concert” given at the Exposition Universelle in Paris on July 12, 1889 at the Trocadero Palace, along with works by Foote, Chadwick, Paine, and MacDowell.

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**arr. HARRY T. BURLEIGH** (1866–1949)

**“Go Down, Moses”** (arr. 1917)

**Instruments for This Performance:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, harp, strings, and voice

**“Behold that Star!”** (arr. 1916)

**Instruments for This Performance:** 2 flutes, 1 oboe, 2 clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 French horns, 2 trumpets, 1 trombone, timpani, percussion, harp, strings, and voice

**“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”** (arr. 1917)

**Instruments for This Performance:** 2 flutes, 1 oboe, 1 English horn, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, harp, strings, and voice

Harry Thacker Burleigh's fame as a singer and composer persists to this day, in part through the ongoing popularity of the spirituals he arranged, and also as perhaps the first Black composer to achieve national awareness. Burleigh was born in Erie, Pennsylvania. His mother was likely his first music teacher, from whom he learned both spirituals and art songs. He was performing publicly as a singer by his late teens, both in choirs and as a soloist, for church services and secular concerts. He received a full, four-year scholarship to the National Conservatory of Music in New York, by which point he was quite well-known as a soloist in Erie and other major cities nearby (Cleveland and Buffalo); his fame would skyrocket in New York. Antonín Dvořák joined the Conservatory as its director in the fall of 1892; he quickly became acquainted with Burleigh. While he was not a composition student of Dvořák's (although Burleigh did study harmony with Dvořák's student Rubin Goldmark), Burleigh spent much time with Dvořák and his family, famously singing spirituals and plantation songs to Dvořák at the same time that the composer was formulating what would become his Ninth Symphony, which includes clear echoes of the songs Burleigh made available to him. In this way, Burleigh inadvertently became a central part of the heated debate regarding what constituted American music.

In 1894, the same year that Dvořák's symphony premiered, Burleigh auditioned with 59 other singers for the position of baritone soloist at St. George's Protestant Episcopal congregation. Each hopeful performed behind a screen, and Burleigh ultimately earned the position, to the dismay of some congregants, who couldn't imagine a person of color in such a prominent post, and to the delight of others, including industrialist J.P. Morgan, who held a leadership role in the church. Burleigh's fame as a singer grew inestimably with this new job; his Palm Sunday performances of Jean Baptiste Faure's "The Palms" became an annual tradition that he repeated without fail from 1895 until his retirement in 1946. He had another regular position, held for 25 years, as one of the two baritones in the choir at Temple Emanu-El, the major Reform synagogue in New York.

As a composer he became famous for his art songs—both individual and song cycles—beginning in 1914. No less a figure than John McCormack, the internationally renowned tenor, featured several of Burleigh's songs in his recitals; his works soon became *de rigueur* for vocalists. While Burleigh had also published his own versions of traditional spirituals as far back as 1901, the major turning point occurred with his arrangement of "Deep River" in 1916, which was adopted by a bevy of soloists around the country and became one of his signature works. His biographer Jean Snyder suggests that the success of "Deep River" corresponds in part with the custom of ending a program of solo vocal works with a grouping of spirituals, a practice that persists to this day. These songs entered the mainstream repertoire very quickly; by December 1917, Burleigh's arrangements of spirituals (including "Deep River") were heard here, in Carnegie Hall, at an anniversary concert for the Musical Art Society, conducted by Frank Damrosch. Concert performances of spirituals had formerly been heard only in choral or ensemble arrangements, not as works

for solo performers. Musicologist Eileen Southern noted that “Burleigh’s achievement made available to concert singers for the first time Negro spirituals set in the manner of art songs.” Burleigh would go on to create dozens upon dozens of spiritual arrangements—for solo voice and in various choral arrangements—in addition to the many art songs he wrote throughout his life. Two of the songs that will be heard tonight, “Go Down, Moses” and “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” were published in his first wave of solo spirituals in 1917; “Behold that Star!” (published in 1928) is one of several later works in the genre.

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**RICHARD WAGNER** (1813–1883)

*Großer Festmarsch (American Centennial March)* (1876)

**Premiere:** May 10, 1876 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at Fairmount Park, conducted by Theodore Thomas

**Instruments for This Performance:** 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings

The earliest piece on our program is probably the most famous—or infamous, depending on who you ask—and was created to celebrate the first hundred years of the country’s existence. The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition or (officially, by act of Congress) the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine had its opening jubilee on May 10, 1876, in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The exposition had something for everyone, including the world’s largest soda fountain, and new (to the general public) and strange items like bananas and Heinz tomato ketchup. The hand and torch of Bartholdi and Eiffel’s new giant sculpture of Liberty Enlightening the World—which has been intended for the nation’s centennial—were put on display, as the rest of the statue was not yet completed.

To help the festivities begin with a bang, the organizers planned a public event that would include speeches from dignitaries—including an official welcome from President (and Civil War hero) Ulysses S. Grant—as well as performances of several pieces of music. The entire event was organized by the Women’s Centennial Committee, presided over by Elizabeth Duane Gillespie, a great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin and longtime friend of Theodore Thomas, perhaps the most famous conductor in the country, who was offered the musical directorship of the opening ceremonies. Throughout his life, Thomas was an advocate for composers in America, programming works by more than 150 American-born (or immigrants to America) composers during his time with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Orchestra, or touring the country leading the Theodore Thomas Orchestra.

For the opening, Thomas commissioned works by two American composers, as well as the man he felt was, in his words, “the most eminent

living composer in the world,” Richard Wagner. Thomas was well-known as one of the major advocates in the US for Wagner’s operas, which were still largely unknown to most music fans. Wagner asked for—and received—the extraordinary sum of \$5,000 for the work, paid in advance. (This amount, as Douglas Shadle observes, was 50 times that which George Bristow, who closes our program, received as commission for an entire symphony, *Arcadian*, just four years earlier). Whether or not Wagner particularly relished this commission is hazy; Cosima Wagner noted in her diary in late December 1875: “R. feels great disgust towards the composition for America; it is unworthy of him!”

Fifty cents got you in to the opening day of the celebration; officials reported the final count was 186,672 people, more than half of whom got in free. A wide variety of luminaires, from J.P. Morgan to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to Frederick Douglass showed up, all presided over by President Grant, along with foreign dignitaries including Emperor Pedro II and Empress Theresa of Brazil. The musical programming began with no fewer than 18 national airs performed in succession, beginning with “The Washington March,” followed by the anthems of European and South American countries, and rounded off by “Hail Columbia,” then the de facto national anthem of the US. Finally, as President Grant first sat upon the stage, Wagner’s *Grand Festival March for the Inauguration of the Hundredth Anniversary Commemoration of the American Declaration of Independence* was heard for the first time ... almost. With so many people present and no way to direct the sounds on the open bandstand, few of those in attendance heard the music.

Then there was the music itself. The reviewer from *Dwight’s Journal* apparently loved the work, hearing echoes of the majesty of *Meistersinger* and the poetry of *Tristan*, ultimately gushing, “No praise which has been lavished upon this noble composition overstates its merit, and we are greatly disappointed in the taste of our countrymen if it does not soon become one of the most popular of Thomas’s concert pieces.” This was in opposition to the *Times* reviewer, who decried, “This achievement did not inspire very lively admiration. It is altogether devoid of the pomp and circumstance which should characterize an achievement of this sort, and all its beauties ... do not make amends for the lack of thought which has made recourse to scholastic treatment of a single theme necessary throughout the 33 pages of the work.” Some were bothered by the fact that an American had not been chosen to open the festival. John Rose Green Hassard, the *Tribune’s* critic, seemed quite happy that the tune did NOT have any identifiable national tunes woven within; he stated, “We might have had to resort to ‘Yankee Doodle’ or ‘Hail Columbia’ from the marine band.” The work ultimately did not enter the repertoire as Thomas had hoped—no matter how often he performed it—and instead became a curiosity, as did the other two works specially commissioned for that morning: a hymn by John Greenleaf Whittier set to music by John Knowles Paine, and the *Centennial Meditation of Columbia*, with words by Sidney Lanier and music by well-known organist and composer Dudley Buck.

**GEORGE FREDERICK BRISTOW** (1825–1898)

**Symphony No. 5, Op. 62, “Niagara”** (1893; Text by Charles Walker Lord)

**Premiere:** April 11, 1898 in New York City at Carnegie Hall, conducted by George Frederick Bristow

**Instruments for This Performance:** 2 flutes, 1 piccolo, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon, 4 French horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, timpani, percussion, strings, vocal soloists, and chorus

The final work on the program is perhaps the most momentous, in that this work was last performed in full in this very space 128 years ago, the night of its premiere. By the time audiences heard his “Niagara” symphony, George Frederick Bristow was at the end of a storied career as a performer, composer, teacher, and—above all—advocate for music in practically all its forms, but especially music for and by Americans. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he was the child of two English immigrants, William and Mary Ann; his father was known in Brooklyn for his musical abilities, and became young George’s first teacher, although he had other illustrious teachers, including violin lessons with Ole Bull when the latter was touring the US. Bristow worked as a violinist and pianist in both groups and as a soloist, as well as taking part in larger ensembles, such as when he played violin in the group that accompanied Jenny Lind during her concert stops in New York City in 1850 and 1851.

While he was still a teenager Bristow began composing, and eventually wrote extensively in vocal music, both sacred and secular, including his very successful oratorio, *Daniel* (1867), along with chamber music and keyboard music. He joined the first violin section of the Philharmonic Society of New York at age 18 and was an active member for more than 35 years. He also had considerable experience as a choral conductor, leading the New York Harmonic Society, an amateur choral ensemble, among several others.

Bristow became a key figure in a debate in the mid-1850s between critics, musicians, and composers about what music should be promoted by local orchestras in the US: compositions by Americans or compositions by Europeans, particularly Germans. Like many others, he felt that the Philharmonic Society undervalued or downright excluded American composers, although much of the rhetoric boiled down to fears about immigration. While Bristow’s compositional style always drew strongly from his European forebears, following the brouhaha the subjects for many of his works skewed toward explicitly American topics, including his comic opera *Rip Van Winkle* (1855, based on the Washington Irving story, and considered the first opera on American themes), the overtures *Columbus* (1861) and *Jibbenainosay* (1889) (the latter based on a 50-year-old American novel combining themes of the gothic and the frontier—two very popular 19th century tropes), and of course “Niagara.” Not long after this public debate, Bristow became a music teacher in the New York Public School system in 1854, and ended up writing several music methods and teaching guides.

Bristow began work on his fifth and final symphony near the end of his career, drawing on a poem by Charles Walker Lord, a schoolteacher and acquaintance. As noted by his biographer, Katherine Preston, the poem (written in the early 1870s) was nostalgic in its view of Niagara Falls, which had lost lustre in the latter part of the century as a point of national pride; the resulting symphony also looks back stylistically to earlier musical forms (including, as others have noted, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony), as well as drawing on familiar older tunes, including the Doxology / "Old Hundredth" and the "Hallelujah" chorus from Handel's *Messiah*.

Bristow finished the symphony in the spring of 1893, meaning that his sonic portrait of America predated Dvořák's by at least a half a year—but "Niagara" did not receive its premiere for almost five years, to be put on by the Manuscript Society of New York, including a chorus of 200, vocal soloists, and the Seidl Grand Orchestra, to be conducted by Anton Seidl himself. Tragedy struck two weeks before the concert, when Seidl died at age 47. The show did ultimately go on, on April 11, 1898, with Bristow conducting his own work here at Carnegie Hall, but with practically no mention: no reviews of the concert have been found, and only a single newspaper notice, recently discovered, indicates the event took place at all. Bristow died doing what he loved—teaching in a music classroom—exactly eight months later.

—Daniel Goldmark

Professor of Music at Case Western Reserve University

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# Texts

**DUDLEY BUCK**

*Festival Overture on the  
American National Air*

Text: Francis Scott Key (1779–1843)

O say, can you see,  
by the dawn's early light,  
what so proudly we hailed  
at the twilight's last gleaming?  
Whose broad stripes  
and bright stars,  
thro' the perilous fight,  
o'er the ramparts we watched,  
were so gallantly streaming.  
And the rocket's red glare,  
the bombs bursting in air,  
gave proof, thro' the night,  
that our flag was still there:  
O say, does that star-spangled  
banner yet wave,  
o'er the land of the free,  
and the home of the brave.

**arr. HARRY T. BURLEIGH**

**“Go Down, Moses”**

Text: Traditional Spiritual

When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go!  
Oppressed so hard they could not  
stand,  
Let my people go!

Go down, Moses,  
'Way down in Egypt's land.  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
To let my people go!

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,  
Let my people go!  
If not I'll smite your firstborn dead,  
Let my people go!

Go down, Moses,  
'Way down in Egypt's land.  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
To let my people go!

**“Behold that Star!”**

Text: Traditional Spiritual

Behold that star!  
Behold that star up yonder,  
Behold that star!  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

There was no room found in the inn,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.  
For Him who was born free from sin,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

The wise men came on from the East,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.  
To worship Him the Prince of Peace,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

Behold that star!  
Behold that star up yonder,  
Behold that star!  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

A song broke forth upon the night,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.  
From angel hosts all robed in white,  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

“Glory to God, world without end,”  
It is the star of Bethlehem.  
“And peace on earth, good will to  
men,”  
It is the star of Bethlehem.

Behold that star!  
Behold that star up yonder,  
Behold that star!  
It is the star of Bethlehem!

## “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

Text: Traditional Spiritual

Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.

I look'd over Jordan what did I see,  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.

Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.

## GEORGE FREDERICK BRISTOW Symphony No. 5, Op. 62, “Niagara”

### Movement IV

Text by Charles Walker Lord

#### Chorus

Let ev'ry pow'r of heart and tongue  
unite to swell the grateful song.  
While age and youth in chorus join  
and praise the Majesty divine.

#### Tenor Solo and Chorus

Niagara! o'erwhelmed with awe and  
wonder,  
Thee I behold. Thy voice in tones of  
thunder  
reverberates throughout my soul  
awakening  
majestic thoughts of God; and to me  
beckoning,  
invites my weary heart where He  
supernal  
Reigns “King of Kings, and Lord of  
Lords,” eternal.

#### Bass Solo

With reverence I bow, thy word  
believing;  
With filial trust I come, thy truths  
receiving.

Great Architect! O let me near thee  
hover;  
Make thy strong arm my sure  
defense and cover.  
That I may pass life's cataract at even  
and moor my fragile bark with thee  
in Heaven.

#### Soprano and Alto Duet

Superior, Huron, Michigan and Erie,  
with little Clair commingling like a  
Peri.  
Speak! Waters deep and blue;  
why do ye gather  
to take this fearful leap?  
Seek ye a mother?  
Is this your roaring? Never, never  
ceasing,  
and ever to the list'ning ear  
increasing!  
For treacherous Atlantic's bosom  
crying;  
Seek ye her briny breast with tears  
and sighing?

#### Chorus

Ye rapids, sparkling, foaming,  
dashing, wildly;  
Ye eddies lulled to gentle rest so  
mildly;  
Ye giddy whirlpools, round and  
round a dancing  
like mettled steed, proud of his rider,  
prancing.  
Ye purling rills, with wayward  
motions straying,  
yet hast'ning on, nor e'er thy course  
delaying.

#### Soprano Solo

Thou rainbow sleeping in a misty  
vapor,  
soft as Cathedral's hue at light of  
taper;  
Ye ribbed rocks, your waters thus  
caressing  
and bidding them good speed, your  
kindest blessing.

## Chorus and Soloists

Thou cataract, thou King of Nature's  
wonders.  
Impetuous, leaping, echoing forth  
thy thunders;  
Combine ye all your diapasons  
blending  
to praise your God in anthems thus  
ascending.

*Our gratitude to Douglas Shadle, Katherine Preston, Jim Sinclair, Timothy Kloeter and Kyle Gann for their efforts in reviving Bristow's rare score and preparing a performing edition, thus making this event possible.*

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# The Artists

## Leon Botstein, Conductor

Leon Botstein has been music director and principal conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra since 1992. He is also music director of The Orchestra Now, an innovative training orchestra composed of top musicians from around the world. He is co-artistic director of Bard SummerScape and the Bard Music Festival, which take place at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College, where he has been president since 1975. He is also conductor laureate of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, where he served as music director from 2003–2011. In 2018, he assumed artistic directorship of the Grafenegg Academy in Austria.



Ric Kallner

Botstein is also active as a guest conductor and can be heard on numerous recordings with the London Symphony (including a Grammy Award-nominated recording of Popov's First Symphony), the London Philharmonic, NDR-Hamburg, and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. Many of his live performances with the American Symphony Orchestra are

available online. His recording with the ASO of Paul Hindemith's *The Long Christmas Dinner* was named one of the top recordings of 2015 by several publications, and his recent recording of Gershwin piano music with the Royal Philharmonic was hailed by *The Guardian* and called "something special ... in a crowded field" by *Musicweb International*.

Botstein is the author of numerous articles and books, including *The Compleat Brahms* (Norton), *Jefferson's Children* (Doubleday), *Judentum und Modernität* (Böhlau), and *Von Beethoven zu Berg* (Zsolnay). He is also the editor of *The Musical Quarterly*. For his contributions to music, he has received the award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and Harvard University's prestigious Centennial Award, as well as the Cross of Honor, First Class from the government of Austria. Other recent awards include the Bruckner Society's Julio Kilenyi Medal of Honor for his interpretations of that composer's music and the Leonard Bernstein Award for the Elevation of Music in Society. In 2011, he was inducted into the American Philosophical Society.

Daniel Welch



### **Freddie Ballentine, Tenor**

Hailing from Norfolk, Virginia, Grammy Award-winning tenor Freddie Ballentine was the 2021 recipient of the Kennedy Center's Marian Anderson Award and is an alumnus of the Cofratz Young Artists of Washington National Opera and LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program. Ballentine's 2025–2026 season includes his Bayerische Staatsoper debut in *Salome*, which he will also record with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería. He returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess*, and makes his Ruhrtriennale debut, reprising Venables/

Huffman's *We Are The Lucky Ones*.

Recent highlights include the world premiere of *We Are The Lucky Ones* (Dutch National Opera); Kevin Richardson in *The Central Park Five* with Detroit Opera; Ben Marco in *The Manchurian Candidate* (Austin Opera); The Witch in *Hänsel und Gretel* (Utah Opera); Sam in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); Jack O'Brien and Toby Higgins in Kurt Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (Opera Vlaanderen); Loge in Wagner's *The Rhinegold* and Nick in *The Handmaid's Tale* (English National Opera); Sportin' Life (The Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, Dutch National Opera); Don José in *Carmen* (Seattle Opera); and Monastatos in Barrie Kosky's production of *Die Zauberflöte* and Amon in *Akhnaten* (LA Opera).

## J’Nai Bridges, Mezzo-Soprano

This season, J’Nai Bridges makes her house debut in the title role of *Carmen* at Teatro Real in Madrid alongside Michael Fabiano and Charles Castronovo, conducted by Eun Sun Kim, reprising the role later in the season at both Seattle Opera and Cincinnati Opera. She reprises Maddalena in *Rigoletto* in her debut at San Francisco Opera, conducted by Eun Sun Kim, and returns to Washington National Opera as Elizabeth Proctor in *The Crucible*, directed by Francesca Zambello and conducted by Robert Spano. In concert, she reprises Maddalena in *Rigoletto* alongside Quinn Kelsey in the title role with Baltimore Symphony conducted by Jonathon Heyward; joins Nashville Symphony for Brian Field’s *Hymn for the Hurting*, with text by Amanda Gorman, and Julia Perry’s *Stabat Mater*; and joins the Gulbenkian Orchestra for their New Year’s concerts, including repertoire by Berlioz, Rossini, Bizet, and Offenbach. In recital, she presents an all-French program at Boston’s Celebrity Series, The Morgan Library in New York, and Wake Forest University. She also presents Damien Geter’s *COTTON* alongside Justin Austin and Laura Ward at La Jolla Music Society, and a program of Coleridge-Taylor, Libby Larsen, Elgar, and others with Terrence Wilson and the Catalyst Quartet at the Library of Congress and Emory University.



Dario Acosta

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## Anna Thompson, Soprano

In the 2025–2026 season, Anna Thomspson joins the Academy of Vocal Arts as a resident artist, where she will debut as Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Die Gräfin in Strauss’s *Capriccio*. Next summer, she joins the Merola Opera Program to sing Micäela in Peter Brook’s *La Tragédie de Carmen*. Last season, Thompson debuted the title role in *Alcina* and Marie Antoinette in *The Ghosts of Versailles* at Rice University. She also debuted at the Bard Music Festival as Mariken in the world premiere of the original French version of Bohuslav Martinů’s *Mariken de Nimègue*, and as soprano soloist in Martinů’s *The Prophecy of Isaiah*.



Elvis Herrera

Thompson was recently named a 2025 Sullivan Foundation Award Winner, Special Judge’s Prize Winner of the Gerda Lissner Foundation Art Song Competition, and Winner of the Philadelphia District of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. She is an alumna of the Apprentice Program for Singers at The Santa Fe Opera, the Gerdine Young Artist Program at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Aspen Music Festival and School. She

holds a Master of Music from Rice University and a Bachelor of Music from the Eastman School of Music.

Blake Nelson



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### **Alan Williams, Bass**

This season, bass Alan Williams debuts with the Pittsburgh Opera as Colline in *La bohème*, led by Music Director Antony Walker, and the New York Philharmonic joining the University of Michigan Chamber Choir to sing Saariaho's *Oltra mar* with composer and conductor Thomas Adès on the podium at David Geffen Hall. Williams returns to the Metropolitan Opera to cover the role of Aldeano 3 in *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* with a production by Deborah Colker under the baton of Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Des Moines Metro Opera to take on the

role of Angelotti in *Tosca* under the baton of David Neely. In the past, Williams has been engaged at the Santa Fe Opera, Aspen Music Festival, Detroit Opera, New York Festival of Song, National Sawdust, Berkshire Opera Festival, and Oxford Lieder Festival, working with conductors James Conlon, Robert Spano, Iván López Reynoso, Carlo Montanaro, George Manahan, Niccolò Muti, Elizabeth Askren, Derrick Inouye, Michael Ellis Ingram, Daniel Suk, and Kazem Abdullah, among others. Williams received degrees from the University of Michigan and Northern Arizona University, before becoming a member of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program with LA Opera. A native of San Bernardino, California, he currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

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### **American Symphony Orchestra**

Now in its 64th season, the American Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1962 by Leopold Stokowski, with a mission of providing great music within the means of everyone. Music Director Leon Botstein expanded that mission when he joined the ASO in 1992, creating thematic concerts that explore music from the perspective of the visual arts, literature, religion, and history, and reviving rarely performed works that audiences would otherwise never have a chance to hear performed live.

The ASO's signature programming includes its Vanguard Series, which presents concerts of rare orchestral repertoire at Carnegie Hall, Bryant Park, and additional venues; its Chamber Series, which features musical programs curated by ASO musicians and performed at venues throughout New York City's boroughs; and various additional events dedicated to enriching and reflecting the diverse perspectives of American culture. During the summer months, the ASO is the orchestra-in-residence at Bard's SummerScape Festival and performs at the Bard Music Festival.

As part of its commitment to expanding the standard orchestral repertoire, the ASO has released recordings on the Telarc, New World, Bridge, Koch, and Vanguard labels, and live performances are also available for digital download. In many cases, these are the only existing recordings of some of the forgotten works that have been restored through ASO performances.

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## **Bard Festival Chorale**

The Bard Festival Chorale was formed in 2003 as the resident choir of the Bard Music Festival. It consists of the finest ensemble singers from New York City and surrounding areas. Many of its members have distinguished careers as soloists and as performers in a variety of choral groups; all possess a shared enthusiasm for the exploration of new and unfamiliar music.

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### **James Bagwell**, Director, Bard Festival Chorale

James Bagwell maintains an active international schedule as a conductor of choral, operatic, and orchestral music. He was most recently named associate conductor of The Orchestra Now (TÖN) and in 2009 was appointed principal guest conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra, leading them in concerts at both Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. From 2009–2015 he served as music director of The Collegiate Chorale, with whom he conducted a number of rarely performed operas-in-concert 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 Golijov's *Oceana*, both 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 this musical. Since 2011 he has collaborated with singer and composer Natalie Merchant, conducting a number of major orchestras across the country, including the San Francisco and Seattle Symphonies.

Bagwell has trained choruses for a number of major American and international orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic; Los Angeles Philharmonic; San Francisco, NHK (Japan), and St. Petersburg Symphonies; and the Budapest Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival, American Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestras. 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.

He conducted some 25 productions as music director of Light Opera Oklahoma. At Bard SummerScape he has lead various theatrical works, most notably *The Tender Land*, which received glowing praise from *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *Opera News*. 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.

# American Symphony Orchestra

Leon Botstein, Conductor

## First Violins

Cyrus Beroukhim  
Concertmaster

Yukie Handa  
Philip Payton  
Robert Zubrycki  
Ashley Horne  
Patricia Davis  
Ragga Petursdottir  
Dorothy Strahl  
Sarah Zun  
Robert Radliff

## Second Violins

Richard Rood  
Principal

Wende Namkung  
Naho Parrini  
Bruno Peña  
Diane Bruce  
Alexander Vselensky  
Akiko Hosoi  
Margarita Milkis

## Violas

William Frampton  
Principal

Sally Shumway  
William Hakim  
Rachel Riggs  
Adria Benjamin  
Chelsea Wimmer

## Cellos

Eugene Moye  
Principal

Roberta Cooper  
Alberto Parrini  
Sarah Carter  
Maureen Hynes  
Emily Brausa

## Basses

Stephen Sas  
Principal  
Jack Wenger  
Louis Bruno  
Richard Ostrovsky  
Milad Daniari

## Flutes

Keith Bonner  
Principal  
Rie Schmidt  
Diva Goodfriend-Koven  
Piccolo  
John Romeri

## Oboes

Alexandra Knoll  
Principal  
Melanie Feld  
Erin Gustafson

## Clarinets

Shari Hoffman  
Principal  
Benjamin Baron  
Ki-Deok Park

## Bassoons

Gina Cuffari  
Principal  
Christian Whitacre  
Brad Balliett  
Contrabassoon  
Jensen Bocco

## Horns

Karl Kramer-Johansen  
Principal  
Nick Auer  
Kyle Anderson  
Kyle Hoyt  
Steven Sherts  
Assistant

## Trumpets

Gareth Flowers  
Principal  
John Dent  
John Sheppard  
Mark Broschinsky  
Bass Trumpet

## Trombones

Nicole Abissi  
Principal  
Andrew Zaharis  
Jeffrey Caswell  
Bass Trombone

## Tuba

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James Bagwell, Director

## Sopranos

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Sarah Benzinger  
Erin Brittain  
Kirsten Brown  
Kate Bullock  
Lindsey Chinn  
Christine Cornell  
Emily Donato  
Amy Goldin  
Rachel Doehring  
Jackson  
Laura Jobin-Acosta  
Berit Johnson  
Abigail Raiford  
Ellen Taylor Sisson  
Holly Thomas

## Altos

Rachel Arky  
Jennifer Borghi  
Christine Browne-Munz

Sishel Claverie  
Allison Gish  
Erica Koehring  
Ema Mitrović  
Katherine Doe Morse  
Margaret O'Connell  
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Kaitlyn Tierney  
Anna Willson

## Tenors

Cristóbal Arias  
Christopher Carter  
Rashard Deleston  
Sean Fallen  
Matthew Krenz  
Alex Longnecker  
Trevor Scott  
Sam Strickland  
Tyler Tejada  
Nathan Wiley

## Basses

Daniel Chiu  
Byron De Leon  
Robert Fertitta  
James Gregory  
Jonathan Guss  
Paul Holmes  
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