

James Bonas

Director

★★★★ Bewitchingly good... Pickett and her artistic collaborator, the actor and director James Bonas, waste no time, grabbing us from the get go... Scottish Ballet has a hit on its hands.

The Times, The Crucible, Scottish Ballet

James Bonas is a traditional storyteller for the modern era, 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.

James Bonas' recent work in opera includes *Candide* at Welsh National Opera in June 2023, with his regular collaborator, animator Grégoire Pont. Other work together includes the French premiere of Abrahamsen's *Snow Queen* for Opéra national du Rhin – winner of the French critics Best Scenic Elements/Scenography award 2022 – and Orff's *Der Mond* and Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and *L'Heure Espagno* for Opéra de Lyon. Their innovative approach has led to these works being seen around the world, including at Opéra de Lille, Royal Opera House Muscat, San Francisco Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

In Spring 2023, Bonas made his German debut with Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Theater Magdeburg to critical acclaim. Other recent stagings include Jonathan Dove's *Flight* for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the world premiere of a new community opera *Silent City* for Matera in Italy (European Capital of Culture) and Chabrier's *L'étoile* at the Teatro Nacional de Sao Carlos (Lisbon).

Bonas also works internationally in dance and enjoys an ongoing collaboration with choreographers including Helen Pickett and Sophie Laplane. With Helen Pickett he created an award-winning narrative ballet - *The Crucible* - for Scottish Ballet, which premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival 2019, with further runs at Sadler's Wells London, the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC and Nashville, Tennessee. With Sophie Laplane he created the celebrated short film *Dive*, also for Scottish Ballet, which has been featured in dance film festivals worldwide including the 2021 Venice Biennale and winning the Grand Jury Prize at Cinedans 2022. Plans in 2023-24 include the premiere of a new ballet – *Emma Bovary* - for Canadian National Ballet with Helen Pickett. Plans further ahead include new creations for Scottish Ballet, Dutch National Ballet and American Ballet Theatre.

An advocate for multi-disciplinary performance, Bonas collaborated with Damon Albarn as Artistic Consultant on the creation of *Le Vol du Boli*, an exploration of the complex and often brutal relations between Europe and West Africa, at the Théâtre du Châtelet. Appearing regularly at the BBC Proms, he staged Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* with the Hebrides Ensemble at the Drill Hall, Lincoln, as well as Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* with Aurora Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall. For the 2022 BBC Proms he collaborated with Anthony Roth-Costanzo and ENO on *Glass Handel* at the Print Works in London.

As associate director James regularly worked alongside directors including Rufus Norris, Terry Gilliam, Tom Morris and Simon McBurney on productions such as *Wonder.land* at the National Theatre and Théâtre du Châtelet, Raskatov *A Dog's Heart* for ENO/Complicité and Adams *The Death of Klinghoffer* for ENO and the Metropolitan Opera.