

Justin Birchell
Baritone | Composer | Educator
(503)-572-3565
justinbirchell@yahoo.com
www.justinbirchell.com

TRAINING & EDUCATION

D.M.A. - Choral Conducting (in pursuit)	University of Washington	2024
M.M. - Voice Performance	UCLA	2021
B.A. Music - Vocal Performance	UCLA	2019

AWARDS AND HONORS

UCLA Philharmonia All-Stars concerto competition winner	2019
Dean's Medal (two-time recipient) UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music	2019 & 2021
Mimi Alpert Feldman Scholarship	2019/2020
Elaine Krown Klein Fine Arts Scholarship	2018/2019
Gluck Music Outreach Fellowship	2017-19
Anchorage Festival of Music Ted Stevens Young Alaskan Artist Award	2018

RELATED JOBS

Music Teacher - Private Studio	since 2009
Students in voice, beginning piano, composition/theory/ear training, and language coaching	
Peer Tutor - Sierra College Tutoring Center	2016-17
Students in Music (theory, history, piano, sight-singing), Math (stats), U.S. History, English/Writing	
Choir Director - Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship	2011-13
Directed AUUF choir and composed original works. Programmed service music & special concerts.	
Music Director - TBA Theatre, Inc.	2008-13
Taught singing to ages 8-adult, music-directed and conducted musicals, composed orig. incidental music	

CHORAL ACTIVITIES

Member, Anchorage Opera chorus	2005-12
Member, Russian-American Colony Singers (including tour of Russian Far East)	2007-12
Section Leader, St. Mary's Episcopal, Anchorage, AK	2007-12
Choir director, Anchorage Christians for Equality	2011-13
Member, PSU Men's Choir	2015-16
Member, UCLA Chamber Singers	2020
Section Leader, Lutheran Church of the Master, L.A.	2018-20

PROJECTS

<i>Inward Journey</i> , recital for Emerging Artist Series at Boston Court Pasadena	Oct 2020
In collaboration with E.A.S. mentor Brent McMunn (Conductor of Opera at U of Southern California), I programmed this highly unusual solo recital, featuring songs and cycles in unusual languages (Irish, Swedish, Finnish) and presenting my narrative vision of a journey within the Self. I performed the works of three living composers and was able to coach with two of them, Mark Robson and Michael Welsh. In the case of the Welsh, this	

recital was a world premiere (his cycle *Sky-Descent*). The program drew on my interests in linguistics, meditation/mysticism, and new music, and it also featured my original photo-collages as visual elements. The final edited video contains even more of my own visual elements: <https://youtu.be/x4rscXd1B5A> .

A Poet's Love, recital with lecture-demo about *Dichterliebe*

Dec 2019

This program was entirely my own conception, and the lecture-demonstration component is something I hope to revive in the future. I presented the complete *Dichterliebe* to a small audience, preceded by a lecture-demo entitled *The Poetics of Longing: Schumann, Heine, ...Ghazal?*. For the benefit of this non-specialist lay audience, I attempted to make this great cycle more accessible by highlighting the life, times and aesthetic philosophies of Schumann and the poet Heinrich Heine, before drawing an illustrative parallel to the beautiful South Asian poetic form known as *ghazal*. The complete lecture-demo can be viewed here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUiIRk_9Nxd2woUmeIqxa0g?view_as=subscriber

Aurora Aubade and *Three Nocturnes - Words of the Night*, original art-songs

2018-19

While pursuing a Bachelors and a Masters in Voice, I have nevertheless remained active as a composer. In 2017, I was commissioned by the soprano Stephanie DePrez to set for her three poems by the poet Hannah Langsenkamp. The result was the cycle *Three Nocturnes - Words of the Night* which was premiered by DePrez and pianist Victoria Kirsch in June of 2018 at Mo Ostin Music Center. Later, DePrez and Kirsch recorded the cycle in professional studio conditions. You can hear that recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akpSZABpaz4>

I wrote a new art song in 2019 based on beautiful poetry by the Alaskan poet Ian Colbert, from his book *Midnight Elegies*. The "song in seven parts" is entitled *Aurora Aubade* and I sang the premiere of the song in June of 2019. You can hear that recording here: https://youtu.be/vN4MD3_zJnk?t=3693

When the Spirit Says "Sing!", choral concert

2013

From 2011-13 I was the choir director at Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. This is a small congregation and the choir was a small ensemble, with singers of wildly varying levels of musical training. Our largest project was a full-length concert-fundraiser we presented, *When the Spirit Says 'Sing!'*. In addition to conducting the entire concert, I collaborated with music-director Dr. Tamara McCoy on programming, and organizing the concert around a structure based on the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism. I also featured as a solo singer and played hand-drums on a few of the pieces as well. Teaching musical concepts to untrained or amateur musicians is a particular competency of mine, and was certainly needed for directing this ensemble.

World Music as a Window on the Human Spirit, workshop

2012

I was selected as a workshop presenter for the 2012 District Assembly of the Pacific Northwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. This workshop represented the type of work I find most satisfying: the attempt to take the profound beauty of the world's musical traditions and, by way of explicating it for an unfamiliar audience, render it digestible as spiritual nourishment. Using musical examples from North India, Indonesia, and the Republic of Georgia, I showed how the traditional musics of these cultures offer a window into the inner life of their members, and beyond that, into humanity-uniting universals.

Illusions: Wild Things and *Illusions: Mechanical Utopia*, live soundtracks

2010-11

During my time working with the community theatre non-profit TBA Theatre, Inc., no projects were as gratifying as the full-length live soundtracks I composed for these two shows. *Illusions* is TBA's series of cirque-nouveau spectacles, presenting magic, juggling, stiltwalking, acrobatics, etc. For these two shows, I assembled a small band featuring me (keyboards, vocals, percussion, didjeridoo), a drummer, and a bassist. Based on structures, themes, and musical "scaffolding" composed by me, we played a partially-improvised full-length background soundtrack live every night of the two runs.



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ROLES

Marcello (upcoming)	<i>La Bohème</i>	Eureka Opera	postponed/date TBD
[Don Alfonso	<i>Così Fan Tutte</i> (CANCELED)	Aquilon Festival	2020]
[Noble/Messenger	<i>The Play of Daniel</i> (CANCELED)	LA Opera	2020]
Padre Antonio	<i>Juana</i> (World Premiere)	Opera UCLA	2019
Manfred	<i>Lost Childhood</i> (World Premiere)	Opera UCLA	2019
Silvio	<i>Pagliacci</i>	Opera Fairbanks	2018
Dr. Falke	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Portland State University Opera	2016
Herr Frank	<i>Die Fledermaus</i>	Portland State University Opera	2016
Sacristan	<i>Tosca</i>	Anchorage Opera	2013
Figaro	<i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i>	University of Alaska Anchorage Opera	2008

RECITALS

Emerging Artist Recital: <i>Inward Journey</i>	Boston Court Pasadena	2020
<i>A Poet's Love: The Magic of the Song Cycle</i>	Lecture-Recital on <i>Dichterliebe</i>	2019
	with other art-song selections	
<i>Voice & Piano</i>	Burbank Chamber Music Society	2019
<i>Poetry and Music</i>	Curated Recital by Matthew Aucoin, UCLA	2018

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M.M. - Voice Performance	UCLA	2021
B.A. Music - Vocal Performance	UCLA	2019
Intensive Summer Program	Lingua e Canto, Italy	2017

CONDUCTORS

Stephen Stubbs
Scott Dunn
Neal Stulberg

DIRECTORS

Peter Kazaras
Bill Fabris
James Darrah

COACHES

Rakefet Hak
Victoria Kirsch
Matthew Aucoin

TEACHERS

Michael Dean
Dr. Rose Beattie
Dr. Robin Fisher

LANGUAGES STUDIED: French - five years, Italian - one year, Russian - one year, German - one year