BOSTON SYMPHONY AND ANDRIS NELSONS ANNOUNCE
MAJOR APPOINTMENT IN MUSIC LEADERSHIP

JAMES BURTON IS APPOINTED CONDUCTOR OF THE TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL CHORUS AND ALSO TAKES ON NEWLY ESTABLISHED ROLE OF BSO CHORAL DIRECTOR

BURTON IS ONLY SECOND LEADER OF THE TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL CHORUS SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1970

BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons announces that British-born James Burton is the next Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, an appointment that takes effect immediately in conjunction with this week's Andris Nelsons-led Boston Symphony performances of Bach's monumental Mass in B Minor, February 2-7, for which Mr. Burton prepared the chorus. In addition, Mr. Burton takes on the newly established title of BSO Choral Director, in which role he will explore new opportunities to enhance the orchestra's choral activities.

The appointment of Mr. Burton to the position of BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus is the result of a search that began in summer 2015, when a committee of TFC members, Boston Symphony musicians, BSO staff, and a representative from the BSO's Board of Trustees, was convened and charged with appointing the next chorus director, under the guidance of Mr. Nelsons. Mr. Burton is only the second conductor to be appointed director of the TFC since its founding in 1970; he follows in the footsteps of John Oliver, founder and director of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus from 1970-2015, who currently holds the title Founder and Conductor Laureate.

James Burton's primary duties as Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus will include auditioning, selecting, and preparing the chorus for performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Boston Pops at Symphony Hall in Boston, on tour, and at Tanglewood, the BSO's summer home in Lenox and Stockbridge, MA. Mr. Burton will at times also serve as an understudy for Andris Nelsons and guest conductors, filling in when needed—including when there are conductor cancellations—to lead the
orchestra and chorus in performances featuring major choral works. He also takes on a consulting responsibility with Mr. Nelsons and other BSO staff, advising both during the program planning process and around the performance activities of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. Mr. Burton will also conduct the Tanglewood Festival Chorus in concerts featuring the ensemble in its own choral programs in Boston and at Tanglewood. As BSO Choral Director, Mr. Burton will consider and suggest new opportunities that would benefit the overall institution by encouraging a broader engagement with choral singing.

The initial contract between the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Mr. Burton begins immediately with this week’s Bach program and runs through the end of the BSO’s 2021-22 season. He begins his full-time work as BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus at the start of the 2017 Tanglewood season. Mr. Burton and his family, who have been living near Oxford, England, will move to the Boston area in the near future.

QUOTE FROM ANDRIS NELSONS, RAY AND MARIA STATA BSO MUSIC DIRECTOR
“Together with my wonderful BSO colleagues, I am very honored to celebrate the appointment of James Burton as the next Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. We are excited to have found such an inspiring and unique person to lead the BSO’s special chorus, and proud to continue the incredible legacy of TFC Founder and Conductor Laureate John Oliver.

James has an extraordinary ear for vocal balance and blend. His immense understanding of the numerous different languages of the chorus’s repertoire, and instincts with all musical styles, are just a few of his many gifts. He has greatly impressed us all with his ability to inspire the chorus and communicate his ideas so effectively regarding both technique and music interpretation. Finally, we all so appreciate James’ collaborative spirit in all his work, sharing his enthusiasm and passion for music with all of us. We all join him in our goal to bring our very best music-making to our wonderful audiences, who have always shown so much admiration and kind support to our all-volunteer chorus.

We invite all friends of the BSO and TFC, and the entire Boston community, to join us in welcoming James and his wife and children into the BSO family. We look forward to bringing our audiences many memorable concerts with our dear TFC and its new leader.”

QUOTE FROM JAMES BURTON, CONDUCTOR OF THE TANGLEWOOD FESTIVAL CHORUS AND BSO CHORAL DIRECTOR

"I am delighted to have been appointed to this prestigious post, and am greatly looking forward to leading the incredibly dedicated members of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, working closely with Andris Nelsons, and to becoming a member of the BSO family of musicians. I have had a fantastic welcome here, and am excited to develop a close relationship with Boston's rich musical community, especially the wonderful audiences of the BSO, as well as the Boston Pops under Keith Lockhart. I have loved choral music since I was a young boy, and I believe that singing is one of the greatest of all human endeavors, not least when voices are joined together in a true harmony. For me to be given the role of bringing great choral music to Boston Symphony audiences at Symphony Hall and Tanglewood is a wonderful privilege, and I am very much looking forward to starting work."
James Burton: Tanglewood Festival Chorus Conductor; BSO Choral Director

Born in London, James Burton began his training at the Choir of Westminster Abbey, where he became head chorister. He was a choral scholar at St. John’s College, Cambridge, and holds a master’s degree in orchestral conducting from the Peabody Conservatory, where he studied with Frederik Prausnitz and Gustav Meier. Since 2002 he has been music director of the chamber choir Schola Cantorum of Oxford. From 2002-09 he served as choral director at the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, England, where he was music director of the Hallé Choir and founding conductor of the Hallé Youth Choir, winning the Gramophone Choral Award in 2009. He returned to Manchester in 2014, preparing the choirs for what would become another Gramophone-nominated recording—Vaughan Williams’ Sea Symphony—under the direction of Hallé Orchestra Music Director Sir Mark Elder. Mr. Burton’s extensive choral conducting has included guest invitations with many highly regarded professional choirs including the Gabrieli Consort, Choir of the Enlightenment, the choir of Poland’s acclaimed Wrocław Philharmonic, and the BBC Singers in London, with whom he appears later this season when the BBC Proms tour to the new opera house in Dubai. In 2017 he will appear as guest director of the National Youth Choir of Japan and the Princeton University Glee Club.

Mr. Burton’s work for the BSO includes preparing the Tanglewood Festival Chorus for this week’s performances of Bach’s monumental Mass in B Minor, under the direction of BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons. During the 2016 Tanglewood season, he led the TFC’s annual Friday Prelude Concert in Ozawa Hall and was guest chorus conductor for the BSO’s season-ending performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, under the direction of Mr. Nelsons, who stepped in for the ailing Christoph von Dohnányi. Mr. Burton also prepared the TFC last summer for an Andris Nelsons-led performance of Acts I and II from Verdi’s Aida. In February 2016 at Symphony Hall Mr. Burton was guest chorus conductor for the TFC’s performances under Charles Dutoit of Berlioz’s Resurrexit and Te Deum; he also worked with Mr. Dutoit in preparing the chorus for performances of Rossini’s Stabat Mater during the 2016 Tanglewood season.

Mr. Burton has conducted orchestra concerts with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Hallé, the Orchestra of Scottish Opera, Royal Northern Sinfonia, BBC Concert Orchestra, and Manchester Camerata; in early 2016 he made his conducting debut with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional of Mexico with concerts in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, and he returns there later this season for performances of orchestral and choral music by Brahms. His opera conducting credits include Don Giovanni and La bohème at English National Opera, Cosi fan tutte at English Touring Opera, The Magic Flute at Garsington Opera, and Gianni Schicchi and Suor Angelica at the Prague Summer Nights Festival. He has served on the music staff of the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra de Paris, English National Opera, Opera Rara, and Garsington Opera, where he was honored with the Leonard Ingrams Award in 2008. He has also conducted in London’s West End and led a UK tour of Bernstein’s Wonderful Town in 2012.

Tanglewood Festival Chorus
James Burton, BSO Choral Director and Conductor of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus
John Oliver, Founder and Conductor Laureate

This season at Symphony Hall, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra for performances of Richard Strauss’ Der Rosenkavalier, Brahms’s Ein deutsches Requiem, Bach’s B minor Mass, and Mozart’s Requiem under BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons, Holst’s The Planets under Charles Dutoit, Busoni’s Piano Concerto under Sakari Oramo, and Debussy’s Nocturnes under BSO Conductor Emeritus Bernard Haitink. Originally formed under the joint sponsorship of Boston University
and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the all-volunteer Tanglewood Festival Chorus was established in 1970 by its founding conductor John Oliver, who stepped down from his leadership position with the TFC at the end of the 2014 Tanglewood season. Awarded the Tanglewood Medal by the BSO to honor his forty-five years of service to the ensemble, Mr. Oliver now holds the lifetime title of Founder and Conductor Laureate and occupies the Donald and Laurie Peck Master Teacher Chair at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Though first established for performances at the BSO’s summer home, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus was soon playing a major role in the BSO’s subscription season as well as BSO concerts at Carnegie Hall. Now numbering more than 300 members, the ensemble performs year-round with the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops. It has performed with Seiji Ozawa and the BSO in Hong Kong and Japan, and with the BSO in Europe under James Levine and Bernard Haitink, also giving a cappella concerts of its own on the two latter occasions. The TFC made its debut in April 1970, in a BSO performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Leonard Bernstein conducting. Its first recording with the orchestra, Berlioz’s *La Damnation of Faust* with Seiji Ozawa, received a Grammy nomination for Best Choral Performance of 1975. The TFC has since made dozens of recordings with the BSO and Boston Pops, with James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davis, Leonard Bernstein, Keith Lockhart, and John Williams. In August 2011, with John Oliver conducting and soloist Stephanie Blythe, the TFC gave the world premiere of Alan Smith’s *An Unknown Sphere* for mezzo-soprano and chorus, commissioned by the BSO for the ensemble’s 40th anniversary. Its most recent recordings on BSO Classics, all drawn from live performances, include a disc of a cappella music led by John Oliver and released to mark the TFC’s 40th anniversary; and, with James Levine conducting, Ravel’s complete *Daphnis and Chloé* (a Grammy-winner for Best Orchestral Performance of 2009), Brahms’s *German Requiem*, and William Bolcom’s Eighth Symphony for chorus and orchestra (a BSO 125th Anniversary Commission). Besides their work with the Boston Symphony, members of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus have performed Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic; participated in a Saito Kinen Festival production of Britten’s *Peter Grimes* under Seiji Ozawa in Japan, and sang Verdi’s Requiem with Charles Dutoit to help close a month-long International Choral Festival given in and around Toronto. The ensemble had the honor of singing at Sen. Edward Kennedy’s funeral; has performed with the Boston Pops for the Boston Red Sox and Boston Celtics; and can also be heard on the soundtracks of Clint Eastwood’s *Mystic River*, John Sayles’s *Silver City*, and Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*. TFC members regularly commute from the greater Boston area, western Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, and TFC alumni frequently return each summer from as far away as Florida and California to sing with the chorus at Tanglewood. Throughout its history, the TFC has established itself as a favorite of conductors, soloists, critics, and audiences alike.