

BOB BERNHARDT BIOGRAPHY

The 2025-26 season highlights several milestones in Bob Bernhardt's career. He starts his 45th season with the Louisville Orchestra, his 11th with the Grand Rapids Symphony, and his 19th with the Edmonton Symphony!

In Louisville, he has been Principal Pops Conductor since 1997, Principal Guest Conductor of Kentucky Opera before that, and the LO's Assistant and Associate Conductor prior to that, all beginning in 1981. He has been the Pops Conductor in Grand Rapids since 2015, and conductor of the ESO's Symphony Under the Sky Festival since 2006, and has been an annual guest on several of their subscription series since then.

Previously, he was Music Director of the Tucson Symphony, the Chattanooga Symphony & Opera, and the Amarillo Symphony; he was also Artistic Director of the Rochester Philharmonic and Lake Placid Sinfonietta. He served as an Artist-in-Residence at Lee University in Cleveland, TN.

His 40 seasons as a Music Director, his 35 years in the opera pit, and nearly 50 years conducting pops give him a unique perspective and insight into all of his work. He is grateful to be a musical omnivore, a fan of almost all music he has been fortunate enough to encounter.

He has been a frequent guest conductor with the Detroit Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the Fort Worth Symphony, the Santa Barbara Symphony, the Louisiana Philharmonic, the Boston Pops, and many others. He made his Pops debut in Boston in 1992 at John Williams' invitation and has been a frequent guest since then.

Born in Rochester, New York, he holds a Master's degree from the University of Southern California School of Music, where he studied with Daniel Lewis. He is also a Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude graduate of Union College in Schenectady, New York, where he played four years of varsity soccer and baseball. In his senior year, he was captain of the soccer team and was selected as an Academic All-American baseball player (third base). While all the research is not yet in, Bernhardt believes he is the only symphony conductor in the history of music to be invited to spring training with the Kansas City Royals. After four days, the Royals suggested a life in music for him. He and his wife, Nora, live in Signal Mountain, TN.