



OMAHA  
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

# Copland's Rodeo

March 22-23, 2024 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Blake Pouliot, violin

SAMUEL BARBER

Overture to *The School for Scandal*

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35

I. Moderato nobile

II. Romance: Andante

III. Finale: Allegro assai vivace

*Blake Pouliot, violin*

**INTERMISSION**

CAROLINE SHAW

*Entr'acte* for String Orchestra

AARON COPLAND

Four Dance Episodes from *Rodeo*

I. Buckaroo Holiday

II. Corral Nocturne

III. Saturday Night Waltz

IV. Hoe-Down

**This printed program is a condensed version.**

For more info about the orchestra, guest artists, and the full program notes, download the Omaha Symphony app or scan this QR code with your mobile device.

\*program subject to change





## **Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor**

Currently in his third season as Music Director of the Omaha Symphony, Ankush Kumar Bahl has delivered resonant performances of masterworks, new and old, and continues to champion American composers and artists while pursuing innovative, community-based concert design. Committed to expanding the American repertoire, the Omaha Symphony and Maestro Bahl have already commissioned or premiered five new works in their first three seasons together by celebrated composers including Andy Akiho and Stacy Garrop. On the podium, Bahl is recognized by orchestras and audiences

alike for his impressive conducting technique, thoughtful interpretations, innovative concert experiences, and engaging presence. In concert, he has left the *Washington Post* “wanting to hear more” and has been praised by the *New York Times* for his “clear authority and enthusiasm” and “ability to inspire.”

Highlights of Bahl’s classical series guest engagements include performances with the New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, and the National Symphony Orchestra (D.C.). An experienced collaborator, Bahl has worked with many prominent soloists, among them Daniil Trifonov, Lang Lang, Emanuel Ax, Sarah Chang, Bhezod Abduraimov, Conrad Tao, Anthony McGill, and Kelley O’Connor.



## **Blake Pouliot, violin**

Described as “immaculate, at once refined and impassioned,” (*ArtsAtlanta*) violinist Blake Pouliot (pool-YACHT) has anchored himself among the ranks of classical phenoms. A tenacious young artist with a passion that enraptures his audience in every performance, Pouliot has established himself as “one of those special talents that comes along once in a lifetime” (*Toronto Star*).

Blake Pouliot’s 2023/24 symphonic highlights include Shostakovich 1, Bruch 1, Tchaikovsky, Korngold and Sibelius concerti across the US and Canada with Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal with Roderick Cox, Artis-Naples and NAC Ottawa with Alexander Shelley, and Quebec City Symphony with Clemens Schuldt, among others.

In Europe this season, Pouliot makes his Spanish debut with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Spain at the Teatro Monumental in Madrid, performing the Tchaikovsky concerto with Rossen Milanov alongside which Pouliot will also play-direct Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons* in a separate chamber program.

During his time as Soloist-in-Residence of Orchestre Métropolitain in 2020/21, Pouliot and Yannick Nézet-Séguin performed Mozart’s Violin Concerto No. 5 and Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons* which led to Pouliot’s 2022 debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Kimmel Center, performing John Corigliano’s *The Red Violin* (Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra) with Nézet-Séguin. Highlights elsewhere include Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal in 2022/23, with Angela Hewitt and Bryan Cheng, as well as performances of the Paganini, Mendelssohn, Saint-Saëns concerti and Bruch’s Scottish Fantasy in subscription series across North America.

## **Overture to *The School for Scandal***

**Samuel Barber**

Born: March 9, 1920 – West Chester, PA

Died: January 23, 1981 – New York, NY

*Piece Length: Approximately 8 minutes.*

Samuel Barber's first orchestral composition, the Overture to *The School for Scandal*, was composed in 1931 while he was still a student at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music, triple-majoring in piano, voice, and composition. An avid reader throughout his life, Barber was inspired by Richard Sheridan's play *The School for Scandal*. The play is a commentary of social conventions of high society, and Barber described the overture as "a musical reflection of the play's spirit." While the overture is itself in traditional sonata form, there's nothing traditional about the drama, ingenuity, and clever ruses employed throughout. The work succeeded as a delightful and exciting opener for Sheridan's play and has established itself as a firm favorite for the concert hall.

## **Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35**

**Erich Korngold**

Born: May 29, 1897 – Brno, Moravia, Austria-Hungary

Died: November 29, 1957 – Los Angeles, CA

*Piece Length: Approximately 25 minutes.*

Erich Korngold was one of the most accomplished child prodigies in the history of Western Classical music. By the age of 11, his ballet *Der Schneemann* (The Snowman) was a hit in Vienna. By 19, his operas were being conducted by the great Bruno Walter while the pianist Artur Schnabel presented his Piano Sonata No. 2 on tours throughout Europe. His early works show a mastery of orchestration and harmony that rivals Richard Strauss in their complexity and chromaticism. After being approached by movie director Max Reinhardt in 1934 – and in the face of Hitler's rise to power – Korngold moved his family to Hollywood, where he would become one of the most important and influential film composers in history, culminating in two Oscar wins. During this time in Hollywood, Korngold refused to compose anything for the concert stage, including suites of his film scores. His wife, Luise, once stated, "It was as if he had taken a vow not to compose a single note outside the genre of film music for as long as the horror [i.e., World War II] was raging throughout the world." He would return to the concert stage with his triumphant Violin Concerto in D Major, a combination of his extraordinary compositional gifts and over a decade in experience writing sweeping, romantic film scores. Premiered by Jascha Heifetz in 1947 – with Heifetz's recording still considered the gold standard – the concerto contains brilliant, technical fireworks for the violinist and melodies from the films *Another Dawn*, *Jaurez*, *Anthony Adverse*, and *The Prince and the Pauper*.

## **Entr'acte**

**Caroline Shaw**

**Born:** in Greenville, North Carolina, August 1, 1982

*Piece Length: Approximately 11 minutes.*

*Program notes for **Entr'acte** by Steven Lowe, © 2022, written for an Omaha Symphony Joslyn program.*

A precocious musical talent, Caroline Shaw began playing violin at age 2 under the tutelage of her mother. Shaw showed compositional ability by age ten, inspired by chamber works by Mozart and Brahms. Her résumé is also

# Program Notes

graced by her gifts as a singer. She earned a Bachelor of Music (violin performance) at Rice University in 2004, a Master's degree (also in violin) from Yale three years later, and entered Princeton University in 2010 in composition. In 2011 Shaw composed *Entr'acte* for string quartet and expanded that chamber work for string orchestra in 2014, which was commissioned by A Far Cry. The composer has noted that *Entr'acte* "was written...after hearing the Brentano Quartet play Haydn's Op. 77, No. 2—with their spare and soulful shift to the D-flat major trio in the minuet. It is structured like a minuet and trio, riffing on that classical form but taking it a little further. I love the way some music (like the minuets of Op. 77) suddenly takes you to the other side of Alice's looking glass, in a kind of absurd, subtle, technicolor transition."

## Four Dance Episodes from *Rodeo*

### Aaron Copland

Born: November 14, 1900 – New York, NY

Died: December 2, 1990 – Sleepy Hollow, NY

*Piece Length: Approximately 18 minutes.*

In 1938, the ballet *Billy the Kid* premiered in Chicago. Aaron Copland's score was one of the first to incorporate cowboy tunes and American folk songs and would help launch the direction of his work over the next couple of decades into what has been described as his Populist period. Moving away from the more avant-garde, dissonant music that characterized his work in the 1920s, Copland wished to compose works that were more accessible for audiences. Many of his most famous works are from this period, including *Appalachian Spring*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and tonight's *Rodeo*. When Copland was first approached by choreographer Agnes de Mille to compose a ballet on the subject of the American cowboy, he was very hesitant to accept. He was resistant to the idea of writing, as he called it, "another Cowboy ballet" after *Billy the Kid*. He eventually agreed, and on October 16, 1942, the ballet was premiered by the Ballet de Monte-Carlo at the old Metropolitan Opera in New York City, some accounts stating that there were 22 curtain calls! The following year, Copland extracted four scenes of the ballet to make a suite.

The story of the ballet was described by de Mille as follows: "The theme of the ballet is basic. It deals with the problem that has confronted all American women, from earliest pioneer times, and which has never ceased to occupy them throughout the history of the building of our country: how to get a suitable man." The ballet is distinctive in the history of dance for a couple of reasons. First, it is considered one of the earliest examples of true American ballet by combining ballet and Broadway dance techniques. The work featured men who are required to pantomime riding and roping along with dancing while dressed in western outfits. The ballet's story also is distinctive as it goes against the stereotypes of many ballet scenarios; rather than a sort of boy-meets-girl storyline, *Rodeo* features the opposite. The main character is the American Cowgirl, an awkward, vulnerable, yet strong character that de Mille described as one who "acts like a boy, not to be a boy, but to be liked by boys." Set at Burnt Ranch, the Cowgirl competes with city girls for the affections of local cowboys, contemplates the vast expanse of the American West, and deals with loneliness over the course of "Buckaroo Holiday," "Corral Nocturne," and "Saturday Night Waltz." Finally, it's during Copland's bold, energetic "Hoe-Down" that we see her succeed, the music an embodiment of the Cowgirl reaching for the life and love that she deserves.