



Piazzolla & Schumann

November 23, 2025 | 2:00 p.m.

Witherspoon Concert Hall | The Joslyn

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Henry Jenkins, violin

REENA ESMAIL

Testament (from Vishwas)

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)

I. Verano Porteño (Summer)

II. Invierno Porteño (Winter)

III. Primavera Porteño (Spring)

IV. Otoño Porteño (Autumn)

Henry Jenkins, violin

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 120

I. Ziemlich langsam - Lebhaft

II. Romanze: Siemlich langsam

III. Scherzo: Lebhaft

IV. Langsam - Lebhaft

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





Currently Artistic Partner of the Omaha Symphony, Ankush Kumar Bahl concluded his tenure as Music Director following the 2024/2025 season. He 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 commissioned seven new works in their four seasons together and in 2023, their live recording of Andy Akiho's *Sculptures* garnered the Omaha Symphony its first Grammy nominations in the orchestra's

history. 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."

American born and of Indian descent, Ankush Kumar Bahl is a native of the San Francisco Bay Area and received a double degree in music and rhetoric from the University of California at Berkeley. He was a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival with David Zinman and completed his master's degree in Orchestral Conducting at the Manhattan School of Music with Zdenek Macal, David Gilbert, and George Manahan. Bahl was also a frequent collaborator with jazz legend Wayne Shorter, conducting his quartet with orchestra in concerts at the Kennedy Center and Detroit Free Jazz Festival.



Henry Jenkins serves as 2nd associate concertmaster of the Omaha Symphony. He grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, where he attended the Oberlin Conservatory under the tutelage of Milan Vitek. During his undergraduate studies, Henry maintained an enthusiastic focus on chamber music, and attended the Litomysl International Masterclass in Czechia. Following graduation, he continued his studies with Kevork Mardirossian at the IU Jacobs School of Music. Henry supplemented his primary studies with a foray into baroque violin performance, studying with Stanley Ritchie and participating in the IU Baroque Orchestra ensemble.

While in Indiana, Henry served as Assistant Concertmaster of the Columbus Indiana Philharmonic and the Terre Haute Symphony Orchestra. He also played in the Evansville Philharmonic, Owensboro Symphony, and Indianapolis Symphony. Henry has been a featured soloist at the National Repertory Orchestra for several summers, and participates in the Artosphere Festival Orchestra, International Chamber Orchestra of Puerto Rico, and the Iris Orchestra.

In his free time, Henry enjoys playing other instruments, including (but not limited to) the banjo, bass, viola, and guitar; listening to all types of music, exercising, and biking.

Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst

Testament (from Vishwas)

Reena Esmail

Born: February 11, 1983 – Chicago, Illinois

Piece Length: Approximately 5 minutes.

Program notes by the composer.

The word *vishwas* (विश्वास) expresses the concept of fervent belief, or faith, in Hindi. Meera Bai, a celebrated saint-poet from 15th century India, is the quintessential embodiment of *vishwas*. Though she is forced into a traditional marriage to unite two kingdoms, she believes she is married to the Lord Krishna, a Hindu deity, and the events of her life are shaped around her fervent devotion to this intangible but omnipresent figure.

Testament is the final movement of a three-part work for bharatanatyam (Indian classical) dancer and orchestra. In Meera's stubbornness, she stages a hunger strike outside the temple of her Lord Krishna, refusing to eat until the doors are opened. One night, after days of fasting, she is extremely weak and lays down to rest. A storm brews, and the high winds begin to swing the lamp outside the temple's wooden door, causing the door to catch fire. As the storm builds, the door burns, eventually causing the entrance to the temple to reopen. This piece incorporates one of Meera's own bhajans (devotional songs), in Raag Malhar, the raag that beckons rain. Krishna has used the forces of nature to show himself, and to honor Meera's faithfulness to him. Even as the flames surround her, Meera walks calmly into the temple to honor her Lord.

Vishwas makes use of traditional Hindustani raags, which are woven through the fabric of the composition. It is fitting that all the information we currently have about Meera Bai and her struggles for self-expression are from her own songs.

Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)

Astor Piazzolla/arr. Leonid Desyatnikov

Born: March 11, 1921 – Mar del Plata, Argentina

Died: July 4, 1992 – Buenos Aires, Argentina

Piece Length: Approximately 28 minutes.

One of the pivotal moments in Astor Piazzolla's life happened in 1954. By this point, the 32-year-old Piazzolla was already a well-known musician in Buenos Aires. He was awarded a grant by the French government to study in Paris with legendary teacher Nadia Boulanger, whose students included such diverse composers as Quincy Jones, Philip Glass, and Aaron Copland. Up to this point, Piazzolla had studied with famous Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera, using the music of Stravinsky, Bartók, and other Modernist composers. When Piazzolla showed Boulanger his compositions, she replied "It's very well written... Here you are like Stravinsky, like Bartók, like Ravel, but you know what happens? I can't find Piazzolla in this." Boulanger started asking about Piazzolla's personal and musical life, trying to get to know the composer better. During these conversations Piazzolla, ashamed to admit he was a tango player, avoided telling her about this aspect of his life. After much inquiry about what instrument he played, he finally admitted to playing the bandoneón. As Piazzolla tells it in his autobiography: "Finally, I confessed [to being a bandoneón player] and she asked me to play some bars of a tango of my own. She suddenly opened her eyes, took my hand and told me: 'You idiot, that's Piazzolla!' And I took all the music I composed, ten years of my life, and sent it to her in two seconds."

We should be grateful for the incredible lessons Boulanger passed along to Piazzolla. Thanks to her teaching, he developed his own voice: 'tango nuevo.' It combines tango with the influence of jazz, fusion, and classical music. So many of his works reflect

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this unique musical perspective, and *Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (*The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*) is one of his finest examples of this blending of musical traditions. The work was originally conceived as multiple compositions, not the one suite presented today. The original orchestration consisted of a violin, piano, electric guitar, double bass, and bandoneón. In the late 1990s, the Russian composer Leonid Desyatnikov took these four pieces and made an arrangement for violin and string orchestra. In his arrangement, Desyatnikov also inserted quotations from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, although instead of having the Vivaldi seasons correspond to Piazzolla's, Desyatnikov reflects the different hemispheres between Europe and Argentina by switching the seasons; for example in Piazzolla's Winter, there are two clear quotations from Vivaldi's Summer.

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 120

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810 – Zwickau, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856 – Endenich, Bonn, Germany

Piece Length: Approximately 30 minutes.

After the successful premiere of his Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major ("Spring") in the spring of 1841, Schumann immediately set to work on a second symphony. Later that year his new symphony was premiered, but less enthusiastically received, leading Schumann to set the second symphony work aside. Ten years later, he returned to the piece, revising it and numbering it officially as his fourth symphony.

Schumann's revisions weren't so much structural as they were orchestral: he thickened the instrumentation, moving away from the "lighter and more transparent... texture" of the original, as described by his biographer Peter Ostwald. In 1889, many years after Schumann's death, his wife Clara gave Johannes Brahms the autograph of the original version of the symphony. Upon going through the score, Brahms found the original version preferable to the revised version and arranged a performance and publication of the original version. When Clara heard about this, she felt Brahms was going against Schumann's final vision of the work, and her anger was so great that the two life-long friends became estranged for over a year. In the end, Brahms never had the work performed or published, and it was not until 2003 that the original version was ever made public.

The structure of the symphonic form was already going through an evolution by 1841. Indeed, starting with the symphonies of Beethoven from the first two decades of the 19th century, the genre began to become a vehicle for composers to express their most profound musical thoughts. The symphony continued to evolve through revolutionary works like Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, and by the end of the 19th century, the great symphonist Gustav Mahler would declare that "a symphony must be like the world...it must contain everything." Schumann's Symphony No. 4 in D Minor, Op. 120, does seem to be a world unto itself, making the symphony a work clearly of the Romantic era. This is illustrated via his cyclical treatment of thematic ideas in which motifs and melodies will appear throughout each movement and his radical approach to form. The symphony can also perhaps be understood as an all-encompassing drama between the two sides of Schumann's personality. In his articles for the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (*New Journal for Musik*), Schumann would present these two sides as characters while discussing various music. He gave these sides the names Florestan – fiery and passionate - and Eusebius, a calmer, more lyrical soul. In these articles, Schumann would advocate for newer trends in music of the time, embracing emotional expression over the adhering to strict, fundamental structures found in much music of the Classical era. This viewpoint can be best summed up by a quote of his: "The principal mark of genius is not perfection, but originality." Indeed, the Symphony No. 4 is a masterpiece from this perspective.