



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

Mozart's Gran Partita

Sunday, November 19, 2023 | 2 p.m.

Strauss Performing Arts Center

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Mark Kurtz, organ

ANDY AKIHO

Petroglyph for brass choir from *Sculptures*

MARK KURTZ

Organ Interlude
Mark Kurtz, organ

GIOVANNI GABRIELI

Sonata 19, from *Canzoni et sonate*

JOHN ADAMS

Shaker Loops
I. Shaking and Trembling
II. Hymning Slews
III. Loops and Verses
IV. A Final Shaking

INTERMISSION

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Serenade No. 10 for 13 instruments, "Gran Partita" K.361
I. Largo - Allegro Molto
II. Menuetto
III. Adagio
IV. Menuetto: Allegretto
V. Romanze: Adagio - Allegretto - Adagio
VI. Thema mit Variationen
VII. Rondo: Allegro molto

Featured Artists



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.

Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst

Petroglyph* from *Sculptures

Andy Akiho

Born: February 7, 1979 - Columbia, South Carolina

Attempting to musically catalog the breadth of artist Jun Kaneko’s work might have been Sisyphean in scope. As composer Andy Akiho began writing music inspired by Kaneko’s artistry, however, certain pieces and processes sifted out, ultimately making his composition *Sculptures* a showcase of ideas that are uniquely Kaneko’s own. The full *Sculptures* has nine movements, some referencing particular art pieces by Kaneko, others, whole swaths of the artist’s output. Today’s selection, *Petroglyph*, refers to a trio of Kaneko’s earliest works – all *Untitled*, from 1963, done in oil paint and sand on canvas. Written entirely for brass, the build and blend of voices is akin to the 3D texture Kaneko created on canvas, a technique that Kaneko would take further with glazes and constructed shapes upon shapes in his later pieces.

Ultimately, *Sculptures* is about the experience created by being with these works, in their space, at the time given, whether able to see Kaneko’s entire artistic output – practically impossible – or this specific reference point, captured eternally by Akiho.

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Organ Interlude

Mark Kurtz

Born: 1972

Interludes – regardless of the instrument performing them – have long been used as a means of getting from one musical point to another. For organists, they serve as both a musical meditation between parts of a religious service and a chance to showcase one’s skill at the keyboard. The music is most often improvised, should allow transition, and maintain a parishioner’s focus on the task at hand. Our organist today, Mark Kurtz, is not only an exceptional keyboardist but a wonderful composer, and he offered to meet us in the middle of this interlude concept. He’ll be performing a semi-improvised work that takes us from Akiho’s *Petroglyph* to the Renaissance-era Gabrieli heard next, allowing members of the Symphony brass section to assume their next position on stage, and for members of the audience to make the genre transition across hundreds of years of music history.

Sonata 19, from *Canzoni et sonate*

Giovanni Gabrieli

Born: c. 1554/1557 - Venice, Italy

Died: August 12, 1612 – Venice, Italy

Giovanni Gabrieli was considered one of the most important musical figures working during his lifetime. A member of the Venetian School of composers, his contemporaries included Giovanni’s uncle Andrea Gabrieli, Gioseffo Zarlino, Heinrich Schütz, and Claudio Monteverdi, whose *L’Orfeo* of 1607 is the earliest operatic work still performed regularly. Their work often utilized an antiphonal setting, which became a calling card for the time period. Antiphonal music, where two or more separated groups of instruments perform on either side of a hall, was influenced by the spacious interior of St. Mark’s Basilica. The architectural design was unique, and created an extraordinary capability for resonance regardless of where the musicians were placed. The *Canzoni et sonate* collection was published in 1615 after Gabrieli’s death. While his later work started using more homophony – think of unison lines and rhythms, similar to a chorale or hymn – the works found in *Canzoni et sonate* still showcase Gabrieli’s masterful contrapuntal writing, with explosive lines weaving in and around one another. Sonata 19 features three choirs, their collaborative lines meeting across the concert space to building, triumphant effect.

Shaker Loops

John Adams

Born: February 15, 1947- Worcester, Massachusetts

Minimalism emerged as a visual art form in the 1950s in the United States, represented by artists such as Frank Stella, whose large, monochromatic paintings known as the *Black Paintings* eliminated all forms and features that were considered non-essential by the artist. Typically characterized by order and simplicity, visual minimalism is perhaps best summed up by Stella, who remarked: “What you see is what you see.” In music, think of minimalism as “what you hear is what you hear.” It found a prominent spotlight in 1960s New York, and can be characterized as containing static harmonies, slow changing patterns, and rhythmic pulses. The aim of the composer is to allow the process of the composition to be better heard by the listener.

Program Notes

While many composers have worked with minimalism, the four people most associated with the movement are La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass. The early works of Reich and Glass are notable for their rigorous approach to the musical process of gradual changes to the music, specializing in small ensembles. A generation after these monumental four, John Adams emerged onto the scene. While clearly influenced by minimalist music, Adams' work is distinguished by adding Romantic era elements to his compositions. This emerges in the quicker pacing of the music, greater drama and clearer climaxes. *Shaker Loops* is a classic example of these traits in his early work.

Originally written for string septet and composed in 1978, *Shaker Loops* used material from a discarded "failed" string quartet. The title references both the technological process of creating minimalist music via tape, and the Quaker-related Shaker religious sect. The work was premiered December 8th in San Francisco's Hellman Hall, conducted by the composer, and was rewritten for string orchestra in 1983.

Serenade No. 10 for 13 instruments, "Gran Partita" K.361

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756 – Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791 – Vienna, Austria

Serenades were a popular musical form that had its greatest popularity during the Classical era. Similar to a divertimento – a generally lighter piece – there is no set form, as opposed to the four-movement symphonies of the time. Likewise, Mozart's serenades took liberties with the number of different instruments or types of ensembles. The unifying factor of Mozart's serenades may be that they were written for specific commissions or occasions. Number 10, "Gran Partita," seems to be the exception. When and why this work was written has never been clearly established. For a period of time, scholars thought it was written for Mozart's own wedding, but this has since been refuted. In fact, there is very little documentation about the work in general, outside of one performance occurring on March 23, 1784, at the Imperial and Royal Theatre in Vienna. That particular concert's serenade only featured four movements as opposed to the seven we will hear this afternoon. The poet and playwright Johann Friedrich Schink wrote after that performance, "I also heard music for wind instruments today by Herr Mozart, in four movements--glorious and sublime! It consisted of 13 instruments, viz. four horns, two oboes, two bassoons, two clarinets, two basset horns, a bass violin, and at each instrument sat a master - oh, what an effect it made--glorious and grand, excellent and sublime." The composition and the unique combination of instruments, including basset horns (alto clarinets), four horns, and contrabassoon results in a richness of sound that belies the "light" nature of the title and creates an indisputable masterpiece.

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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

