



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

Beethoven 4

Sunday, January 7, 2024 | 2 p.m.

Strauss Performing Arts Center

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin

SARAH KIRKLAND SNIDER

*If you bring forth what is within you: Suite from
The Blue Hour*

I. balm, belief, benediction

II. matinal, mirage, mosaic

III. hillock, hoarfrost, hush

IV. sanctuary, sea glass, sorrow

V. intercessor, iris, illuminant

VI. escriptoire, estuary, enough

LUKAS FOSS

Three American Pieces

I. Early Song

II. Dedication

III. Composer's Holiday

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin

INTERMISSION

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

I. Adagio - Allegro vivace

II. Adagio

III. Allegro vivace

IV. Allegro ma non troppo

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.



Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin

Susanna Perry Gilmore enjoys a multifaceted career as solo artist, chamber musician, and orchestral concertmaster. Performing on both modern and period instruments and versatile in diverse styles from classical to fiddling, she is hailed as a player who is both “thrilling and sensitive” by the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, “luminous and hypnotic” by the *Omaha World-Herald*, and “authentic with exquisite good taste” and “rich in tone, bringing musical depth and a human touch” by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Ms. Gilmore frequently appears as a soloist with the Omaha Symphony on the Masterworks, Symphony Joslyn, and Symphony Pops series. Recent performances include the Scottish Fantasy by Max Bruch and Celtic Journey: Magic of the Emerald Isle. In recent seasons Omaha audiences have heard Ms. Gilmore perform the *Tzigane* by Ravel, Berg's Violin Concerto, Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Mozart Violin Concerto No. 5, and the Korngold Violin Concerto as well as major concertmaster solos such as Rimsky Korsakov *Scheherazade* and Strauss *Ein Heldenleben*.

After beginning her career as a chamber player, at the age of twenty-six Ms. Gilmore became concertmaster of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. She joined the Omaha Symphony as concertmaster in 2011. Since 2014 she has been a frequent soloist and co-concertmaster on baroque violin and fiddle with the acclaimed period instrument ensemble and Grammy Award winner Apollo's Fire (Cleveland), with whom she tours nationally and internationally and appears on the CD *Sugarloaf Mountain: An Appalachian Gathering* (Billboard Top 10 classical bestseller), the CD *Sephardic Journey: Wanderings of the Spanish Jews* (Billboard Top 10 classical bestseller), and *Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain*.

If you bring forth what is within you: Suite from *The Blue Hour*

Sarah Kirkland Snider

Born: October 8, 1973 – Princeton, New Jersey

*Notes from **The Blue Hour** by Alex Fortes, © 2019*

One way that humans strive to control uncontrollable realities such as death is by imposing arbitrary rules and structures on the chaotic and inevitable. Another is by participating in the difficult but necessary act of being active members of a community or communities. *The Blue Hour*, in its conception, its process, and its content, lives and breathes these paradoxes. The work is an ambitious collaboration between five composers (Rachel Grimes, Sarah Kirkland Snider, Angélica Negrón, Shara Nova, and Caroline Shaw), a vocalist (Grammy-winner Luciana Souza), and the democratic, self-conducted string collective A Far Cry, and uses Carolyn Forché's poem, "On Earth," as its text. The music that sets the poem draws similarly from an eclectic set of influences, at times setting the text quite literally (as with explicit references to Bach and settings that evoke plainchant and Renaissance polyphony), and at times using extended string techniques to create kaleidoscopic sound-paintings of Forché's moments of fantastical, jarring imagery. The work also gleams with power ballads – unapologetic lyricism and no-nonsense songwriting that is often associated with contemporary non-classical genres but which here contributes to the intimacy and universality of the subject matter. The various movements, each entirely written by one of the composers, access the personal vernaculars and interests of each composer as they pass through the ordered but nonlinear narrative of Forché's poem, contributing to the scope and scale of the work and its underlying subjects. The entire process led to members of A Far Cry releasing a sort of mission statement, below:

"In a time when we are seeing masses of people dehumanized – by war, displacement, poverty – we are looking here at a single life, the beautiful detail of one human existence. There is something precious in that; that through our sense of empathy with this one individual, we are given a lens through which to see our own world with greater clarity."

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Three American Pieces

Lukas Foss

Born: August 15, 1922 – Berlin, Germany

Died: February 1, 2009 – New York, NY

Lukas Foss was an important composer, teacher, pianist, and conductor working in America during most of the mid to late 20th century. Born in Berlin, Foss's family moved to the United States in 1937 to escape the Nazis. He is considered part of the "Boston School", a group of composers from Boston – including Irving Fine, Arthur Berger, Louise Talma, and Leonard Bernstein, a lifelong friend - who were influenced by Igor Stravinsky's neoclassical works. Foss's *Three American Pieces* are a great example of the composition extolled by the Boston School. Originally written for violin and piano in the 1940s, Foss also arranged the work for flute and piano and, in 1986, orchestrated it. Within the piece, you can hear odes to Copland's Clarinet Concerto, the dance-inspiration of Stravinsky, Bernstein's love of jazz, and even a potential homage to the grandfather of American music, Charles Ives, all through the lens of spirited, folk-tune oriented writing for solo violin.

Program Notes

Symphony No. 4 in B-flat Major, Op. 60

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770 - Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827 - Vienna, Austria

In September 1806, Beethoven and his patron, Prince Lichnowsky, visited the home of Count Franz von Oppersdorff in what is now Poland. While there, Count Oppersdorff's private orchestra gave a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 in his honor. Shortly after, the Count commissioned Beethoven to compose a new symphony. Beethoven was already at work on what would become his Symphony No. 5, but for reasons not quite known, he set it aside to compose this symphony. Sandwiched between two towering masterpieces of the symphonic literature, Beethoven's Third and Fifth, the Fourth has often been overshadowed. It may be due to the smaller size of the orchestra, the shorter length, its appearance as less-than-revolutionary, especially given the approaches to form and tonality that are admired in its bookends. In fact, Robert Schumann once compared Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 to a "Greek maiden between two Norse giants." Likewise, the Fourth does not have the dramatic fire of the 3rd and 5th symphonies - but this isn't necessarily a detractor. Hector Berlioz, a great admirer of this work, recognized this when he stated, "Here, Beethoven entirely abandons ode and elegy, in order to return to the less elevated and less somber, but not less difficult, style of the Second Symphony. The general character of this score is either lively, alert, and gay or of a celestial sweetness." We believe that you'll find the same: delight, humor, and sparkling technique - a breath of fresh air written between two intense, oxygen-stealing symphonic monuments.

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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

