



OMAHA  
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

# Rouse's Flute Concerto

February 4, 2024 | 2 p.m.

Strauss Performing Arts Center

Sameer Patel, conductor | Maria Harding, flute

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

*The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave), Op. 26*

CHRISTOPHER ROUSE

Concerto for Flute & Orchestra

I. Amhrán

II. Alla marcia

III. Elegia

IV. Scherzo

V. Amhrán

*Maria Harding, flute*

**INTERMISSION**

OSVALDO GOLIJOV

*Tenebrae* for string orchestra

IGOR STRAVINSKY

*Jeu de Cartes (Game of Cards)*

I. First Deal

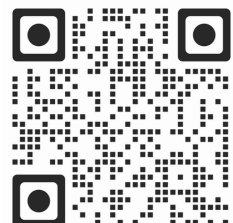
II. Second Deal

III. Third Deal

**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





## **Sameer Patel, conductor**

Named *Musical America's* April 2023 New Artist of the Month and recognized for his "profound artistry" (*The San Diego Union Tribune*), Sameer Patel is one of America's most exciting conductors. Patel was recently appointed the Music Director and Orchestra Conductor of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus and is also Artistic Director of the San Diego Youth Symphony. Formerly, he served as Associate Conductor of the Sun Valley Music Festival and Associate Conductor of the San Diego Symphony and held conducting positions with the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. Patel has assisted and learned from some of the greatest conductors of our time – Gianandrea Noseda, Daniele Gatti, Gustavo Dudamel, Jaap van Zweden, Charles Dutoit, Paavo Järvi, Kurt Masur, Bernard Haitink, Edo de Waart, Robert Spano, and Stéphane Denève – and is dedicated to fostering the next generation of passionate musicians. Patel's impressive work has led to recognition by the Solti Foundation U.S., which granted him three consecutive Career Assistance Awards and an Elizabeth Buccheri Opera Residency with North Carolina Opera; Daniele Gatti, acknowledging Patel as a top conductor at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy; Kurt Masur, the late Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, with a prize from the Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Foundation; and the League of American Orchestras. Born and raised in Michigan, Patel makes his home in San Diego with his wife, Shannon, and two children, Devan and Veda.



## **Maria Harding, flute**

Colleagues and critics alike regard flutist Maria Harding as an "artistic anchor" and "a truly remarkable musician". She is one of today's most notable orchestral flutists, receiving much attention for her beautiful tone and her expressive, colorful phrasing.

Principal Flute of the Omaha Symphony since 1997, Maria began her orchestral career at age 16 in the Lubbock Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Gurer Aykal. She has played with the Saint Louis Symphony, the San Diego Symphony, the Kansas City Symphony, the Schloßfestspiele Orchestra in Heidelberg, Germany, and has held the position of Principal Flute with the Charleston (SC) Symphony Orchestra.

As a soloist, at age 18 she was awarded first prize in a competition sponsored by the National Flute Association. She also took top awards at the McCarty Young Artists' Competition and the Myrna Brown Competition. The Yamaha Corporation quickly took note of her talent and named her a Young Performing Artist, and later an Artist/Clinician. Through this program she currently serves as a visiting musical coach in university programs and summer festivals across the country.

## ***The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave), Op. 26***

### **Felix Mendelssohn**

Born: February 2, 1809 – Hamburg, Germany

Died: November 4, 1847 – Leipzig, Germany

Piece Length: Approximately 11 minutes.

In 1829, Mendelssohn made the first of ten visits to England, where he would become an influential figure on the British musical scene, before continuing on to Scotland. While there, he visited the uninhabited island of Staffa in

the Inner Hebrides, where the titular Fingal's Cave is located. Mendelssohn was immediately inspired by it, so much so that he wrote to his sister, Fanny, who was an equally talented composer, "In order to make you understand how extraordinarily the Hebrides affected me, I send you the following, which came into my head there," and included the main theme of the overture presented today. While *The Hebrides* is a work written in the early decades of the Romantic era, it was fundamentally ahead of its time. An early example of programmatic music - a composition whose form is influenced by a story, artwork, or other types of external narrative - Mendelssohn is musically illustrating his feelings while maintaining standards of compositional form. At times mysterious and haunting, at others thrilling and overwhelming, *The Hebrides* has spent nearly two hundred years bringing listeners to the very edge of the sea through a melody Mendelssohn was compelled to share, immediately, with his sister.

## **Flute Concerto**

### **Christopher Rouse**

Born: February 15, 1949 – Baltimore, Maryland

Died: September 21, 2019 – Baltimore, Maryland

*Piece Length: Approximately 27 minutes.*

*Content Warning: References to the murder of a child.*

Christopher Rouse was an American composer best known for his orchestral works, which include six symphonies and twelve concertos for various instruments. He was a Neoromantic composer whose emotionally charged writing would fluctuate between music he himself described as "fast and furious" and extraordinarily delicate and lyrical. This concerto showcases the latter side of his work. Completed on August 15, 1993, in Fairport, NY, the concerto was premiered by its commissioner: Carol Wincenc of the Detroit Symphony, conducted by Hans Vonk on October 27, 1994. In his program notes for the work, Rouse states "The concerto, in a general sense at least, was inspired by my reactions to and reflections upon the Celtic tradition, though in no sense is the piece intended to be heard as music to a specific program." The work is structured in an arch form, with the third movement being not only the longest of the piece but the most dramatic - and tragic - as well, a response to the horrific abduction and murder of two-year-old James Bulger by two 10-year-olds that occurred in 1993 in England. Rouse was horrified and gripped by the case while writing the concerto and found his best ability to channel his emotions was through composition. Ultimately, Rouse builds to this emotional center and then ebbs away from it, allowing the listener to process the same way he as a composer might have felt catharsis in setting pen to paper, using the flute as a beautiful and fitting vehicle of expression.

## ***Tenebrae***

### **Oswaldo Golijov**

Born: December 5, 1960 – La Plata, Argentina

*Piece Length: Approximately 15 minutes.*

*Tenebrae* ("Darkness") was originally composed in 2002 as a string quartet for the Kronos Quartet and was arranged by the Boston chamber orchestra A Far Cry years later. In French Baroque music, "Leçons de

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ténèbres,” or “lessons of darkness” are polyphonic settings of the Old Testament Book of Lamentations that mourn the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. François Couperin’s 1714 *Troisième Leçon de ténèbres à deux voix*, translated as “Three Lessons of Darkness for two voices,” is quoted in Golijov’s 21st century work. The music was inspired by two events in the composer’s life in 2000. The first was a visit to Jerusalem in September a week before an uprising by Palestinians against Israel that led to a five-year period of ongoing violence. The second occurred a week later when he visited a planetarium in New York City with his then five-year-old son, in which they saw a video that showed Earth from the perspective of space. This observation filled Golijov and his son with an awe that he could only express in music. Golijov has since written that *Tenebrae* exists to hold two perspectives: one, to listen removed enough to hear only the beauty, and two, to listen so closely as to hear only the pain until the tension built is allowed to break.

## ***Jeu de Cartes (Game of Cards)***

### **Igor Stravinsky**

Born: June 17, 1882– Lomonosov, Saint Petersburg, Russia

Died: April 6, 1971 – New York, NY

*Piece Length: Approximately 25 minutes.*

On January 2, 1934, the great choreographer George Balanchine, with the financial help of Lincoln Kirstein, opened the School of American Ballet (SAB) in New York City. At the same time, Balanchine and Kirstein created the short-lived American Ballet company (not to be confused with the American Ballet Theatre still in existence today). The company featured many students of SAB. The American Ballet was unable to mount a tour and only staged two dance performances at the Old Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, but the second of these two performances - presented on April 27, 1937 - was an evening of choreography to the music of Igor Stravinsky, including the premiere of *Jeu de Cartes*. Stravinsky had contemplated composing a work based on his favorite card game, poker, as early as the late 1920s before starting work on the actual commission in November 1935. Stravinsky’s summary of the story of the ballet is as follows: “The subject of this ballet is a session of poker. Several players are sitting around the green baize table of a gambling hall. The dancers represent the principal playing cards. Each game is disrupted by repeated mischief on the part of the unpredictable Joker.”

The ballet is set in three “deals” instead of three scenes and is an exceptional example of Stravinsky’s mastery of neoclassical composition. Each deal begins with the same introduction to represent the shuffling of cards. The Joker battles with the other hand of cards in each deal. In the first two deals, the Joker is victorious, while in the third, he is beaten by a Royal Flush of Hearts. Despite the general fun of the music of the ballet, Stravinsky included a quote from the famed 17th century French fabulist Jean de La Fontaine’s poem “The Wolf and the Lamb,” that not only sums up the moral of the ballet, but is also perhaps a not-too-veiled commentary on Hitler’s then rise to power: “We must forever wage war on the wicked. Peace is very good in itself, I agree. But how can it help against the deceitful enemies.”