



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

Appalachian Spring

March 17, 2024 | 2 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Paul Haas, conductor | Craig Fuller, tuba

BÉLA BARTÓK

Romanian Folk Dances

I. Jocul cu băță (Stick Dance)

II. Brâul (Waistband Dance)

III. Pe loc (Stamping Dance, or On the Spot)

IV. Buciumeana (Hornpipe Dance)

V. Poarga românească (Romanian Polka)

VI. Mărunțel (Quick Dance)

ARVO PÄRT

Fratres (1991)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Concerto in F Minor for Tuba & Orchestra

I. Allegro moderato

II. Romanza: Andante sostenuto

III. Finale; Rondo alla tedesca: Allegro

Craig Fuller, tuba

INTERMISSION

WILLIAM GRANT STILL

Mother and Child

AARON COPLAND

Suite from Appalachian Spring



Paul Haas, conductor

Paul Haas has been Music Director of the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas (SoNA) since 2010. An extraordinarily supportive community and the orchestra's connection with an appreciative and faithful audience have allowed SoNA to grow its operations substantially, necessitating a fourfold increase in its operating budget. "I'm so proud of all we're accomplishing," says Haas. "When you look at the orchestral landscape across the country, it's heartening to see examples of success – of true community engagement – like this one.

It really is a unique situation." SoNA's fans are equally proud; one wrote to Haas, "You are truly a breath of fresh air – I love your youthful exuberance, and it's easy to see that your players are really joining you in true music-making." Haas recently completed a transformational tenure as Music Director of the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, which is considered one of Canada's best regional orchestras and is noted for its history of innovative programming and important premieres. Haas is also the founder of Sympho, an organization devoted to the creation and performance of symphonic experiences in unusual venues.



Craig Fuller, tuba

Craig Fuller has been Principal Tuba of the Omaha Symphony since 1978. He is also Professor Emeritus of Music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he taught for 32 years. He is a graduate of Indiana University where he studied with the late Harvey Phillips. Fuller has performed as a soloist with the Omaha Symphony on numerous occasions, as well as the Lincoln Symphony, the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra and the U.S. Army Orchestra in Washington D.C. He has performed solo recitals in a number of states, and has performed in

brass quintet recitals throughout the Midwest and in the Czech Republic.

In addition to his long associations with the Omaha and Lincoln Symphonies, Fuller has also performed with the Chicago Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Henry Mancini Orchestra and the Peninsula Music Festival Orchestra in Door County, Wisconsin. Fuller's former students include numerous public school teachers, college teachers and symphony orchestra tuba players throughout the United States. One of his areas of research includes instrument design and repair. He authored a chapter in the "Tuba Source Book" in this area and he holds a U.S. Patent for an instrument design.

The Omaha Jaycees recognized Fuller for community service and professional achievement by naming him an "Outstanding Young Omahan." Fuller has recorded with numerous groups including Mannheim Steamroller, Pete Yorn, the Omaha Symphony and the Chicago Symphony. He has played for many of the world's top conductors including Leonard Bernstein, Klaus Tennestadt, Seiji Ozawa, Daniel Barenboim, Leonard Slatkin, Gunther Schuller and Robert Spano. Fuller has been involved in commissioning new works for tuba and brass quintet and has performed a number of world premieres of new works.

Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst

Romanian Folk Dances

Béla Bartók

Born: March 25, 1881 – Sânnicolau Mare, Romania

Died: September 26, 1945 – New York, NY

Piece Length: Approximately 6 minutes.

In 1904 while on holiday, Bartók happened to overhear a nanny singing Transylvanian folk songs to the children under her care, sparking an interest in folk music. He and lifelong friend Zoltán Kodály traveled to the countryside to start collecting and studying folk songs, effectively creating the field of ethnomusicology - the study of music in its cultural context. What they discovered was that the music sung in the villages of Eastern Europe was vastly different than common concepts of Hungarian folk music portrayed in pieces like Franz Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies. Crucial musical elements, such as the use of pentatonic scales, modes versus the Western delineation of major versus minor, asymmetric meters, and harmonies that did not follow traditional progressions became Eastern European hallmarks, and resulted today's work, Bartók's Romanian Folk Dances. A suite of six folk melodies originally written for piano in 1915 and orchestrated two years later, it showcases authentic Transylvanian melodies collected by the composer and expanded by his classically trained background.

Fratres

Arvo Pärt

Born: September 11, 1935 – Paide, Järva County, Estonia

Piece Length: Approximately 10 minutes.

After a compositional crisis in the 1960s, Arvo Pärt turned to Gregorian chant, polyphonic Renaissance music, and his own religious leanings, ultimately emerging back on the concert scene in 1976. His new work would center on his unique style of minimalism called *tintinnabulum*, explaining "Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers - in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it?" The music composed in this style is some of his most enduring, including *Tabula Rasa*, *Spiegel im Spiegel*, and *Fratres*. Originally composed as three-part music without fixed instrumentation, *Fratres* is a simple set of nine variations with a percussion motif. Listening to Pärt is often a meditative experience; if you enjoyed Osvaldo Golijov's *Tenebrae*, you may encounter a very similar concert experience here.

Concerto in F Minor for Tuba and Orchestra

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Born: October 12, 1872 – Down Ampney, United Kingdom

Died: August 26, 1958 – Hanover Terrace, London

Piece Length: Approximately 13 minutes.

In 1953, Ralph Vaughan Williams was commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra to compose a work to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the orchestra's founding. The result of this commission was the first concerto for solo tuba written for the principal tuba player, Philip Catelinet, and has become one of Vaughan Williams' most popular compositions as it threads an extraordinary needle. On one hand, it showcases a hallmark of his

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style - elegant string writing with melodies and harmonies that evoke the English countryside, and on the other, it treats the tuba with the respect the instrument deserves by avoiding any comical gestures that can sometimes be associated with it. The result is a tuneful, vibrant masterpiece.

Mother and Child

William Grant Still

Born: May 11, 1895 – Woodville, MS

Died: December 3, 1978 – Los Angeles, CA

Piece Length: Approximately 7 minutes.

William Grant Still composed nearly 200 works in his lifetime, including five symphonies, four ballets, and numerous vocal and chamber works. He attended the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, was a part of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and '30s, and has been referred to as the “Dean of Afro-American Composers.” In 1943, Still composed his Suite for Violin and Piano. Still commented, “When I was asked to compose a suite for violin and piano, I thought of three contemporary Negro [sic] Artists whom I admire and resolved to try to catch in music my feeling for an outstanding work by each of them.” *Mother and Child* is the second movement of the suite, inspired by the painter and sculptor Sargent Johnson who created numerous intimate works in both mediums called *Mother and Child*. This arrangement for strings by Still captures the intimacy of a mother tenderly embracing her young child.

Suite from Appalachian Spring

Aaron Copland

Born: November 14, 1900 – New York, NY

Died: December 2, 1990 – Sleepy Hollow, NY

Piece Length: Approximately 25 minutes.

In 1921, Copland moved to Paris from New York, ultimately studying with Nadia Boulanger, one of the greatest teachers of composition in the history of music. In Paris, he was exposed to many contemporary composers, most notably Igor Stravinsky, who Copland greatly admired. Back in the States, Copland's Populist phase led to some of his most famous scores, including the ballets *Rodeo* and *Billy the Kid*, *Fanfare for a Common Man*, and today's piece - perhaps his most famous work - *Appalachian Spring*. Premiered in 1944, the ballet is set in a small, 1800s village in Pennsylvania and depicts a wedding day. In 1945, Copland extracted five of the eight scenes of the ballet into a concert suite. This original, 13-instrument version is intimate, revealing the layers of compositional style that Copland developed in Paris with Boulanger and Stravinsky.

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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

