



OMAHA  
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2022/23 SEASON

# Montgomery & Beethoven 3

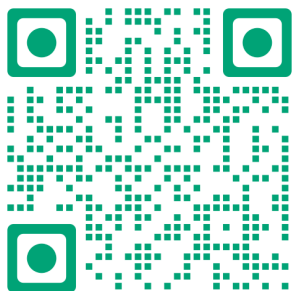
Friday, October 21, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. | Saturday, October 22, 2022 at 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Awadagin Pratt, piano

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This printed program is a condensed version. For more info about the orchestra, guest artists, and the music, download the Omaha Symphony app or scan this QR code with your mobile device.



STACY  
GARROP

***Berko's Journey (World Premiere)***

*Commissioned in honor of  
KVNO's 50th Anniversary*

JESSIE  
MONTGOMERY

***Rounds for Piano and Strings***

*Awadagin Pratt, piano*

LUDWIG VAN  
BEETHOVEN

***Symphony No. 3 in E-flat  
Major, Op. 55, "Eroica"***

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto

\*program subject to change

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## Meet the Maestro



**Ankush Kumar Bahl, Conductor**

Currently in his second season as Music Director of the Omaha Symphony, Ankush Kumar Bahl has delivered resonant performances of masterworks, new and old, championing American composers and artists while pursuing innovative, community-based concert design. Bahl is recognized by orchestras and audiences alike for his impressive conducting technique, thoughtful interpretations, and engaging podium 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 previous and upcoming guest engagements include concerts with the New York Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, Richmond Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO, in Washington, D.C.). Summer festival appearances engagements include the Copenhagen Philharmonic at Tivoli,

Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Wintergreen Summer Music Festival, Chautauqua Institute, Wolf Trap with the NSO, and a debut at the Brevard Music Center in the summer of 2022. An experienced collaborator, Bahl has worked with many prominent soloists, among them Daniil Trifonov, Lang Lang, Sarah Chang, Lara St. John, Karen Gomyo, Aaron Diehl, Bhezod Abduraimov, Benjamin Grosvenor, Orion Weiss, Conrad Tao, Charlie Albright, Anthony McGill, Kelley O'Connor, Philadelphia Orchestra Concertmaster David Kim, and Vesko Eschkenazy, concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Bahl is a proud recipient of four separate Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Awards between 2011 and 2016 and the 2009 Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Scholarship. A protégé of former New York Philharmonic Music Director Kurt Masur, he served as his assistant conductor at the Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. From 2011 to 2015, he was assistant conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach, leading a variety of concerts over the course of 100 performances. Bahl has been fortunate to also count Maestros Jaap van Zweden, Zdenek Macal, David Zinman, and Gianandrea Noseda among his mentors.

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 and George Manahan. In recent years, Bahl has been a frequent collaborator with jazz legend Wayne Shorter, conducting his quartet in concerts of his orchestral music at the Kennedy Center and Detroit Free Jazz Festival.

## Featured Artist



**Awadagin Pratt, Piano**

Among his generation of concert artists, pianist Awadagin Pratt is acclaimed for his musical insight and intensely involving performances in recital and with symphony orchestras. Born in Pittsburgh, Pratt began studying piano at the age of six. Three years later, having moved to Normal, Illinois, with his family, he also began studying violin. At the age of 16 he entered the University of Illinois where he studied piano, violin, and conducting. He subsequently enrolled at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he became the first student in the school's history to receive diplomas in three performance areas – piano, violin and conducting. In 1992, Mr. Pratt won the Naumburg International Piano Competition and two years later was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Since then, he has played numerous recitals throughout the US including performances at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles, Chicago's Orchestra Hall and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

His many orchestral performances include appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Atlanta, St. Louis, National and Detroit symphonies among many others. Summer festival engagements include appearances at Ravinia, Blossom, Wolf Trap, Caramoor, Aspen, and the Hollywood Bowl.

An experienced conductor, Mr. Pratt has conducted programs with the Toledo, New Mexico, Vancouver WA, Winston-Salem and Santa Fe symphonies, the Northwest Sinfonietta, the Concertante di Chicago and several orchestras in Japan. Upcoming conducting activities include play/conducting the Chamber Orchestra of Pittsburgh and conducting performances of *Porgy and Bess* for the Greensboro Opera.

A great favorite on college and university performing arts series and a strong advocate of music education, Awadagin Pratt participates in numerous residency and outreach activities wherever he appears as a soloist or conductor. He is also frequently invited to participate on international competition juries, such as the Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in Israel, the Cleveland International Piano Competition, Minnesota e-Competition, the Unisa International Piano Competition in South Africa and the Competition for Young Pianists in Memory of Vladimir Horowitz in the Ukraine.

Mr. Pratt's recordings for Angel/EMI include *A Long Way from Normal*, an all-Beethoven Sonata CD, *Live from South Africa*, *Transformations*, and an all-Bach disc with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. His most recent recordings are the Brahms Sonatas for Cello and Piano with Zuill Bailey for Telarc and a recording of the music of Judith Lang Zaimont with the Harlem String Quartet for Navona Records.

# Program Summary



## ***Berko's Journey* (World Premiere)**

**Stacy Garrop**

Born: Columbus, Ohio, December 5, 1969

A composer living in the Chicago area, Stacy Garrop has never lacked for inspiration, writing for everything from opera to instrumental solo and all genres in between. *Berko's Journey*, however, comes from a unique, deeply personal place: her great-grandfather's immigration to America. Garrop will tell you herself that "there is nothing unusual about [her] family history," but the discovery of a folder, tucked away in a filing cabinet, drove home how much more there was to both her own and her ancestors' stories... and that she'd never truly asked the right questions. Commissioned in honor of KVNO's 50th Anniversary, *Berko's Journey* follows the life of Garrop's great-grandfather Berko Gorobzoff as he travels from persecution from what is now Ukraine, across the Atlantic Ocean, and eventually to Omaha, Nebraska, where he would remain for the rest of his life. The work is programmatic, weaving the Yiddish and Klezmer tunes of Berko's time-period with the sounds of Ellis Island, the trains that transported immigrants across the country, and a special theme crafted especially to represent Garrop's ancestor at his highest and lowest moments.

## ***Rounds for Piano and Strings***

**Jessie Montgomery**

Born: New York City, December 8, 1981

Jessie Montgomery wears the triple crown of composer, violinist and educator. Accolades include ASCAP's Leonard Bernstein Award and the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, and The Washington Post has described her music as "turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life." As with many American composers, her work embraces elements from the vernacular of our country's music, improvisation, poetry, and social consciousness, as well as a deep fascination with science and creation. *Rounds*, her first piano concerto, is simultaneously inspired by poetry by T.S. Eliot – his Four Quartets – fractals (natural patterns that appear to occur the same way regardless of scale), and philosopher Andreas Weber's theory on the interdependency of living organisms. Montgomery writes, "[...] beginning to understand this interconnectedness requires that we slow down, listen, and observe both the effect and the opposite effect caused by every single action and movement." For Montgomery, this exercise became a nesting-doll of rondos for soloist Awadagin Pratt, each containing a surprise. *Rounds* was written for Pratt, and we are delighted to bring both him and this stunning new work by Montgomery to Omaha within the first year of its creation.

## ***Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55, "Eroica"***

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

Born: in Bonn, Germany, December 16, 1770

Died: in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Is it possible to summarize Beethoven's Third Symphony in a single paragraph?

Probably not. It's a behemoth in E-flat Major, a gargantuan orchestration of power and complexity and rhythm that still can knock an audience into the back of their seats, over 200 years after it was originally composed. And, even though it was originally dedicated to Napoleon – his "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" big selling points for Beethoven – the moment the French conqueror declared himself "Emperor," Beethoven pivoted, and the Third has remained simply "Eroica" ever since. Besides his Ninth, the Third is Beethoven's longest symphony – he needed the time to include every trick, delight, power move, surprise, and devastatingly epic musical theme that he had within him. At times, you may either need a tissue, should hold onto your hat, or want to laugh out loud - we encourage you to let your feelings out. It's a doozy – the best, most wonderful doozy, and absolutely spectacular to experience live. We're glad you're here.

(c) Steven Lowe & Dani Meier