



# OMAHA SYMPHONY

Thomas Wilkins, Music Director

program notes

2020 - 2021 SEASON

Celebrating 100 Years

# Beethoven Septet

Sunday, October 18, 2020 at 2:00 PM | Holland Center

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin; Ann Beebe, violin; Brian Sherwood, viola; Paul Ledwon, cello;  
Greg Clinton, cello; Nate Olson, bass; Carmelo Galante, clarinet; Nick Nelson, bassoon;  
Brett Hodge, horn; Robert O' Brien, percussion; Derek Dreier, percussion

## RICHARD STRAUSS

arr. Hasenöhrl (1864-1949)

### *Till Eulenspiegel einmal anders!*

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin; Carmelo Galante, clarinet; Nick Nelson, bassoon;  
Brett Hodge, horn; Nate Olson, bass

## CAROLINE SHAW

(b. 1982)

### *Boris Kerner* ★ Omaha Premiere ★

Greg Clinton, cello; Robert O' Brien, percussion

## REINHOLD GLIÈRE

arr. Frank Proto (1875 - 1956)

### *Suite from 8 Pieces for Violin & Cello, Op. 39*

Brian Sherwood, viola; Nate Olson, bass

## ROBERT HONSTEIN

(b. 1980)

### *Patter* ★ Omaha Premiere ★

Ann Beebe, violin; Greg Clinton, cello; Derek Dreier, marimba

## WINSTON SCHNEIDER

(b. 2007)

### *The Summer of COVID-19* ★ Omaha Premiere ★ *(from the perspective of a 17-year-old girl)*

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin; Ann Beebe, violin; Brian Sherwood, viola;  
Paul Ledwon, cello; Nate Olson, bass; Carmelo Galante, clarinet;  
Nick Nelson, bassoon; Brett Hodge, horn

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770-1827)

### *Septet in E-flat minor, Op. 20*

Susanna Perry Gilmore, violin; Brian Sherwood, viola; Paul Ledwon, cello;  
Nate Olson, bass; Carmelo Galante, clarinet, Nick Nelson, bassoon;  
Brett Hodge, horn

Historical composers interacted with one another in a way that we don't always acknowledge as listeners. Sometimes the separation of existence – whether decades or centuries – gives us a museum-oriented view: imagining each of them studying the others, but never deliberately impacted. We even apply this artistic bubble to composers who coexisted, which, though safer in pandemic times, isn't accurate.

Or fun.

Take basketball. Imagine LeBron James without Michael Jordan. Although the two never professionally competed, LeBron would have devoured footage of Jordan playing during the crucial development of his own game. Now, imagine Michael Jordan without Magic Johnson. Magic Johnson without Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Kareem without Wilt Chamberlain. No one is saying that any of these athletes wouldn't have become world-class players, but the ability to *actively* learn, to study in real-time, the influence and inspiration passed down over the years – these are things that hone exceptional people.

The same is true of musicians. Because of Beethoven – and his marvelous Septet – doors opened for composers throughout the 193 years since he escaped this mortal coil. The moment one composer tries something is the moment it becomes possible for all. Beethoven decided he need a clarinet, AND a French horn, AND a bassoon in his ensemble currently occupied by solo strings. Previous composers had stuck with a single wind instrument, but he used three – and then upped the ante by deciding the instrumentation could be arranged, and re-arranged, depending on who wanted to perform the work. Extrapolate that through more than two centuries of composers taking that ball and running with it (and the author's apologies for mixed sports metaphors), and you have – on the tamer side – violists and double bassists arranging works for their own use, and – on the wilder side – a thought-provoking work for cello and a collection of tuned flower pots. The Septet has, since 1800, proven an inspiration for both larger mixed ensembles and creatively scored smaller ones. Even in 2020, chamber music continues to answer the prompt: what can you do with Beethoven's groundwork laid before you?

A lot, it turns out. An infinite number of possibilities, thanks to the giants who came before and who will come after. Let's start with the Strauss.

## ***Till Eulenspiegel einmal anders!*** (1895/1954)

**Richard Strauss/ Franz Hasenöhl**

Technically, this first work is Richard Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel lustige Streiche*, but it was Franz Hasenöhl, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century professor of composition in Vienna, that reduced Strauss' infamous tone poem down to a small but mighty quintet. *Till Eulenspiegel einmal anders!*, or, "Till Eulenspiegel another way!", took the epic ode to Germany's most notorious prankster, Till Eulenspiegel, and created a feisty ensemble from members of the Beethoven Septet: violin, double bass, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon. Today's performers are Susanna Perry Gilmore, Nate Olson, Carmelo Galante, Brett Hodge, and Nick Nelson.

The craziest part, other than reducing a usually 70-person ensemble to five? This is Franz Hasenöhl's *only* known work, arrangement, or original. He published it in 1954 under a pseudonym (Franz Höhl – a huge stretch), a choice that may indicate he was, ah, both tremendously thrilled with how it turned out and scared to death about its reception.

Good news: it's a home run. The unconventional instrumentation allows the quintet to keep the character and colors of the original orchestration. The clarinet and French horn embody the character of Till Eulenspiegel either as a duo or individually, depending on how mischievous he's being, and the violin beautifully represents the poor, exhausted townspeople. Bassoon and double bass lay the foundation for all sorts of shenanigans, and clever choices in choosing which parts of Strauss' piece stayed or went result in a piece that feels complete as is.

Who *is* Till Eulenspiegel, you ask? Imagine a chaotic-neutral, immortal Amelia Bedilia; around for centuries, and enjoying every second. Goethe described his notoriety as thus: "All of the chief jests [...] depend on this: that everybody speaks figuratively and Eulenspiegel takes it literally."

Enjoy. We all need a good laugh these days!

**Boris Kerner** (2012) ☆Omaha Premiere☆  
**Caroline Shaw**

We're transitioning from Strauss' lively anti-hero to a brain-twister by living composer Caroline Shaw: her *Boris Kerner* for cello and percussionist playing flower pots.

Yes, you read that correctly.

An American composer, vocalist, violinist, producer, and all-around artistic badass, Shaw also just happens to be the youngest winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music. When our Principal Percussionist, Rob O'Brien, mentioned this piece, composed in 2012, we knew that we had to include it on today's program. Just as we asked with the Strauss, though, we need to ask with the Shaw – who *is* Boris Kerner?

We went down a Wikipedia rabbit-hole to find out. From Shaw's program notes: "Boris S. Kerner lives in Stuttgart and is the author of *Introduction to Modern Traffic Flow Theory and Control: The Long Road to Three-Phase Traffic Theory.*"

Confused? You and us both. What do a Russian scientist and his mind-bending treatise have to do with chamber music?! A lot, actually: as an artistic prompt, Shaw used the phrase "the detail of the pattern is in movement," based on Kerner's work, and it has resulted in a truly calming yet thought-provoking piece of music.

Here's what's happening, as best as we can explain it: Kerner's theory involves two large concepts: metastability, and nucleation. In a desperate bid on social media to better understand both, a much smarter friend has supplied an example to work with: the cat on the sofa, and the cat on the door frame. A cat curled upon the sofa has strong metastability: it would take a strong action of some kind – an annoying human, a fellow cat, dinner time – to dislodge it. A cat perched on a door frame, however, has weak metastability; it can be forced to move very easily, whether by forces of nature or on its own. The amount of time it takes for that cat to move from either scenario is nucleation: how annoying *is* the human? How hungry *is* the cat? How thin *is* the door frame? Nucleation – the cat moving to its next energy phase – is fast or slow depending on the conditions acted upon it while in its resting state.

Let's apply this now to *Boris Kerner*, our cellist, and our percussionist. Greg Clinton on cello will begin with a more subdued pattern. As his playing becomes more insistent, the flower pots – played by Rob O'Brien – begin to contribute to the piece. As each player contributes more to the work, the other is spurred on, until they're forced to the next energy phase of the piece: choices of different flower pots, pizzicato versus bowed notes, tempo and timbre. The result is your daily moment of Zen: a surprising side effect of a work based on traffic theory, but nonetheless effective.

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER



### Caroline Shaw, composer

Caroline Shaw is a New York-based musician—vocalist, violinist, composer, and producer—who performs in solo and collaborative projects. She was the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for *Partita for 8 Voices*, written for the Grammy-winning Roomful of Teeth, of which she is a member. Recent commissions include new works for Renée Fleming with Inon Barnatan, Dawn Upshaw with Sō Percussion and Gil Kalish, Seattle Symphony, Anne Sofie von Otter with Philharmonia Baroque, the LA Philharmonic, Juilliard 415, the Orchestra of St. Luke's with John Lithgow, the Dover Quartet, TENET, The Crossing, the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia, the Calidore Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, the Baltimore Symphony, and Roomful of Teeth with A Far Cry. Caroline's film scores include Erica Fae's *To Keep the Light* and Josephine Decker's *Madeline's Madeline* as well as the upcoming short *8th Year of the Emergency* by Maureen Towey. She has produced for Kanye West (*The Life of Pablo; Ye*) and Nas (*NASIR*), and has contributed to records by The National, and by Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parry. Once she got to sing in three-part harmony with Sara Bareilles and Ben Folds at the Kennedy Center, and that was pretty much the bees' knees and elbows. Caroline has studied at Rice, Yale, and Princeton, currently teaches at NYU, and is a Creative Associate at the Juilliard School. She has held residencies at Dumbarton Oaks, the Banff Centre, Music on Main, and the Vail Dance Festival. Caroline loves the color yellow, otters, Beethoven opus 74, Mozart opera, Kinhaven, the smell of rosemary, and the sound of a janky mandolin.

## Suite for Viola & Double Bass, from Eight Pieces for Violin & Cello, Op. 39 (1909/1980) Reinhold Glière/Frank Proto

We're ducking back into the 20<sup>th</sup> century now, with Reinhold Glière's Eight Pieces for Violin & Cello, Op. 39, arranged into a suite by bassist Frank Proto for viola and double bass. Glière was one of the great Russian Romantic composers, most famous for his ballet *The Red Poppy* and its *Russian Sailor's Dance*. This quaint set of movements, however, combines lovely folk music and virtuosity, regardless of which instruments are performing, and feels unshackled by a particular style, nationality, or century. Proto, a composer as well as a performer, has a long history of creating original works and arrangements for slightly neglected instruments, and this Suite shows off the best parts of both viola and double bass. Brian Sherwood and Nate Olson will perform the Prelude, Cradle Song, and Gavotte.

### **Patter** (2010) ★Omaha Premiere★

Robert Honstein

If you've never gotten to hear marimba in chamber music before, you're in for a beautiful introduction. Robert Honstein, a living composer based in New York, has had his works performed by the Albany Symphony, Eighth Blackbird, Quince (an Omaha favorite!), and the Tanglewood Music Center. Much like Beethoven's frequent revisiting of the Septet, Honstein revised *Patter* twice after its original creation; the version you're hearing today, performed by Ann Beebe, Greg Clinton, and Derek Dreier, is the final iteration. Honstein described the work as:

"A quick succession of light soft tapping noises: the patter of rain on the rooftops. To move with the light, softly audible steps: the patter of little feet around the house. A conversation heard faintly, through the door or the floor: the patter of sisters, friends or neighbors speaking quietly."

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER



### Robert Honstein, composer

Celebrated for his "waves of colorful sounds" (*New York Times*) and "smart, appealing works" (*The New Yorker*), Robert Honstein (b. 1980) is a New York-based composer of orchestral, chamber, and vocal music. Robert is a founding member of the New York-based composer collective Sleeping Giant, co-founder of Fast Forward Austin and Times Two in Boston. As an educator, he is Program Manager and Composition Faculty at NYU, Steinhardt. His music has been performed by the Albany Symphony, Dayton Philharmonic, Eighth Blackbird, Ensemble Dal Niente, Mivos Quartet, Del Sol Quartet, Argus Quartet, New Morse Code, Colin Currie, Theo Bleckmann, Doug Perkins, Michael Burritt, Karl Larson, and Ashley Bathgate, among others. Interdisciplinary collaborators include photographer Chris McCaw, projection designer Hannash Wasileski, graphic designer Laura Grey, director Daniel Fish, and the Cincinnati Ballet. His music has been released by New Focus Records, Soundspells Productions, Cedille Records, and New Amsterdam Records.

### **The Summer of COVID-19 (from the perspective of a 17-year-old girl)** (2020)

Winston Schneider

Here in Omaha, we're lucky to have not just a thriving arts community, but a local, working composer: twelve-year-old Winston Schneider. We commissioned him to write a work, using the Beethoven Septet instrumentation as a starting point; here is *The Summer of COVID-19* in his own words:

"Many musical works are inspired by events affecting people's lives. COVID-19 affected everyone's lives worldwide. We heard and continue to hear about it every day. This is one particular story - a 17-year-old girl living in Omaha in the summer of the pandemic. One story out of the 7.5 billion people in the world. Her story is not a viral headline story. It's a story like many of ours, a melancholy realization that life is not like it was before and each person has a different story. That concept became the refrain of this piece, spoken simply, alongside her personal reflections about her own life. I wanted to spotlight her words as much as possible, as I

wanted her personality to be reflected in the overall work.

The piece started to take a musical shape after the main melodic motive came to me while riding in the car. I liked the idea of using a solo bassoon to begin the piece, because, to me, it sounds lonely, almost like standing in the middle of nowhere all by yourself. This feeling of loneliness, to me, reflects the isolation we all felt during the pandemic summer. As the piece nears the end, there is even more of an introspective and melancholy texture that I felt would fit the text.

I purposely saved the words COVID-19 to be spoken only at the end of the piece for a poignant ending, and the work will be archived at the Durham Museum to help future generations see her life through her eyes."

## ABOUT THE COMPOSER



### Winston Schneider, composer

Twelve-year-old Winston Schneider is a composer, pianist, and cellist. He's won over 19 honors and awards for his musical compositions, including first nationally in the NAFME Composition Competition, the NAFME Electronic Composition Competition, and was one of six pre-college composers selected internationally to compose a new piece for the MATA Jr. Festival in New York (2018). Most recently in late 2019, he won MTNA's state piano performance competition and MTNA's composition competition. Schneider, who has a rare ability of absolute pitch, was featured in a NET/PBS series called "What If...Winston, Young Composer," and a series called "Nebraska Stories: Winston, Kid Composer," and was featured nationally on the PBS "Arts Canvas" website: "Bugs and books become inspiration for this twelve-year-old composer." He studies music at the Omaha Conservatory of Music and privately, and also enjoys playing cello with the Omaha Area Youth Symphony, participating in musicals at The Rose, and spending time with his two cats, his sister, cousins and friends.

### Septet (1800)

#### Ludwig Van Beethoven

So – we've reached the grand conclusion, as well as the archetype of mixed chamber ensembles. This monster of the repertoire, this grand warhorse of chamber music...

... was originally conceived as a divertimento.

Divertimentos are traditionally party music, entertaining tunes to be performed while people (usually outdoors) enjoyed socializing. They are not, typically, fiery tour-de-force compositions, demanding on all fronts for every musician involved, nor six movements long.

And yet, here we are! Beethoven himself was surprised; the Septet was wildly popular in all of its configurations (he re-arranged it multiple times), and though he initially enjoyed its success, it soon irritated him to see it overshadow other works he felt more deserving. You could argue that his successful redefining of a chamber music ensemble is "at fault" here and that this "trifle" is a much heavier lift than Beethoven wants to give it credit for. And, as we've seen, it opened the door for his contemporaries and the artists who would come after him, which by itself is a tremendous legacy.

The septet features solo strings (Susanna Perry Gilmore on violin, Brian Sherwood on viola, Paul Ledwon on cello, Nate Olson on bass) along with clarinet (Carmelo Galante), French horn (Brett Hodge), and bassoon (Nick Nelson.) They'll be performing four of the six movements today, a tremendous way to complete this Septet inspired program and cap this lovely afternoon of music. Enjoy.