



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2023/24 SEASON

The Magic Flute

November 3-4, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Alejandro Gómez Guillén, conductor | Demarre McGill, flute

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Overture to *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), K. 620

KEVIN PUTS

Flute Concerto for Solo Flute and Orchestra

I. With great sincerity and affection; flexible, with motion

II. Andante

III. Very fast, with tremendous energy

Demarre McGill, flute

INTERMISSION

JEAN SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 82

I. Tempo molto moderato - Allegro moderato - Presto

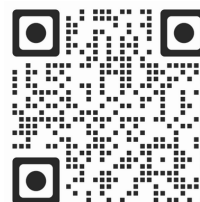
II. Andante mosso; quasi allegretto

III. Allegro molto - Misterioso

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



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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.



Demarre McGill, flute

Demarre McGill has gained international recognition as a soloist, recitalist, chamber and orchestral musician. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, he has appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Seattle, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Grant Park, Hawaii, San Diego, San Francisco and Baltimore symphony orchestras and, at age 15, the Chicago Symphony.

Now principal flute of the Seattle Symphony, he previously served as principal flute of the Dallas Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Florida Orchestra, and Santa Fe Opera Orchestra and as acting principal flute of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

As an educator, Demarre has performed, coached and presented master classes in South Africa, Korea, Japan, Quebec and throughout the United States. With his brother Anthony, he was a speaker and performer at the 2018 League of American Orchestras Conference. He has also served on the faculties of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States, the National Orchestral Institute (NOI) at the University of Maryland, the Orford Music Festival, and participated in Summerfest at the Curtis Institute of Music, to name of few. In August of 2019, he was named Associate Professor of Flute at Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and is an artist-faculty member of the Aspen Music Festival and School.

A native of Chicago, Demarre McGill began studying flute at age 7 and later, until he left Chicago, was a student of Susan Levitin. He attended the Merit School, was a member of the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra and went on to study at The Curtis Institute of Music and The Juilliard School where he studied with Jeffrey Khaner and Julius Baker.

Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst

Overture to *The Magic Flute*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756 – Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791 – Vienna Austria

Piece Length: Approximately 8 minutes.

What happens when you combine Mozart, music borrowed from Muzio Clementi, German folklore and a lifetime commitment to a fraternal order of brotherhood centering around general Enlightenment? *The Magic Flute*, obviously! The opera, one of Mozart's final works, became an extraordinary success, each of the disparate elements above combining to create a fanciful yet deeply thoughtful masterpiece. Mozart's involvement with the Freemasons is woven especially into the overture, which was the final part of the opera to be completed. The three tutti chords at the start incorporate a Masonic initiation ceremony, where a candidate knocks at the door three times to be let into the lodge. The number three is greatly significant to Freemasons, and Mozart found extraordinarily clever ways of incorporating it beyond those opening chords. First, the piece is in E-flat, which has three flats in the key signature. Second, the overture is in modified sonata form, which contains three distinct sections. Third, Mozart uses his absconded Clementi theme to present an exposition that is, in fact, a three-voice fugue. The icing on the cake? As the overture comes to an exciting conclusion, Mozart unfolds a coda that groups music in bars of three, rather than the traditional four, pushing the momentum forward to the final tutti chord...
... which is, of course, played three times.

Flute Concerto for Solo Flute and Orchestra

Kevin Puts

Born: January 3, 1972 – St. Louis, Missouri

Piece Length: Approximately 23 minutes.

The following program notes have been provided by the composer.

Bette and Joe Hirsch are longtime patrons of the annual Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in Santa Cruz, California, who became fans of my music when they heard my Symphony No. 2 performed at the festival in 2002. Incidentally, this was the first time Marin Alsop, the festival's Music Director, had programmed a piece of mine, and it was the beginning of a musical friendship I continue to cherish. A few years ago, Bette secretly approached the festival about commissioning an orchestra piece from me for Joe's 75th birthday. Not long after, Joe also secretly approached the festival about a chamber piece for the couple's 35th wedding anniversary. My thought was that a single piece might suffice (!), and why not a flute concerto, as I had never written one, and Bette played the flute in her youth?

What opens the concerto is a melody I have had swimming around in my head for more than half a lifetime now, something I began singing to myself in college and for which I had never found appropriate context. I was reminded of it while listening to a recording of Adam Walker, the brilliant principal flutist of the London Symphony Orchestra and the soloist whom Maestra Alsop had invited to premiere the concerto.

Program Notes

Built on a simple three-note motive, the theme is lyrical and easy to remember but somewhat rhythmically irregular at the same time.

The second movement was written during a period in which I was rather obsessed with the second movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467, often referred to as the "Elvira Madigan concerto" due to its use in the eponymously titled film of the '70s. What Mozart could evoke with a major chord repeated in triplets, a simple bass-line played pizzicato, and a melody floating above is mind-boggling and humbling to me. Nonetheless, I decided to enter into this hallowed environment, and, in a sense, to speak from within it in my own voice.

Rhythm drives the third movement, its main ideas drawn from the main theme of the first movement and culminating in a highly energetic dialogue between the soloist and a small, contrapuntal band of winds, brass and percussion.

Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 82

Jean Sibelius

Born: December 8, 1865 – Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957 – Järvenpää, Finland

Piece Length: Approximately 35 minutes.

The first few decades of the 20th century saw a number of changes to Western classical music. The tonal system that was the organizing factor for most music from Bach to Brahms was being expanded by composers such as Debussy, Mahler, and Strauss. In the first few years of the 1910s, things were pushed further by two major milestones in modern music: 1912 and Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, a song cycle that is primarily atonal, and 1913 and Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. There was no way that the genre of the symphony could remain untouched. These musical changes, set against the backdrop of World War I, the fall of the Russian monarchy in 1917, and Finland's declaration of independence, seemed to require something radical from a composer beloved in his home country, but internationally deemed far too conservative. While it's fair that Sibelius' harmonic language remained more accessible, it took 20th century critics time to appreciate that his accessibility hid something far more groundbreaking than they'd first believed. His Symphony No. 5, a triumphant, three-movement wonder that would buck expected symphonic structure across the entire piece, premiered in its final form in 1919. Sibelius wrote, "I should like to compare the symphony to a river. It is born from various rivulets that seek each other, and in this way, the river proceeds wide and powerful towards the sea." *Powerful* is the key word – at its heart, the Fifth is an unstoppable force, an inexorable build of momentum and light shining out of humanity's most confused, conflicted, and darkest years.