



OMAHA
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2024/25 SEASON

Bottesini & Beethoven 8

October 6, 2024 | 2 p.m.

The Joslyn

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Nate Olson, double bass

GIOACHINO ROSSINI

Overture to *L'Italiana in Algeri*

GIOVANNI BOTTESINI

Concerto No. 2 in B minor, for Double Bass & Orchestra

I. Allegro moderato

II. Andante

III. Allegro

Nate Olson, double bass

INTERMISSION

OTTORINO RESPIGHI

Suite I from *Ancient Airs and Dances*, P. 109

1. Simone Molinaro (1599): Balletto detto "Il Conte Orlando"

2. Vincenzo Galilei (155.): Gagliarda

3. Anon. (late 16th Century): Villanella

4. Anon. (late 16th Century): Passo mezzo e Mascherada

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93

I. Allegro vivace con brio

II. Allegretto scherzando

III. Tempo di menuetto

IV. Allegro vivace



Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor

Currently in his fourth 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 commissioned seven new works in their first four seasons together and in 2023, their live recording of Andy Akiho's *Sculptures* garnered the Omaha

Symphony its first GRAMMY nominations in the orchestra's history. 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.



Nate Olson, bass

Nate Olson, principal bass, comes from a family of musicians. Originally from Bargersville, Indiana, Nate played several instruments as a child before choosing double bass as his primary instrument at age 11. His primary teachers include Jack Budrow, Robert Goodlett, Lawrence Hurst, Peter Lloyd, and Kurt Muroki.

Nate has performed with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the National Repertory Orchestra, the Oregon Symphony, and the Santa Barbara Symphony. He has also participated in the Aspen Summer Music Festival, the Brevard Music Center Summer Festival, and the Interlochen Arts Camp. Nate earned his Bachelor of Music and Performance Diploma degrees from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and graduated with a Masters of Music from the Colburn Conservatory.

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



Overture to *L'italiana in Algeri*

Gioachino Rossini

Born: February 29, 1792 – Pesaro, Italy

Died: November 13, 1868 – Paris, France

Piece Length: Approximately 7 minutes.

Rossini was a prolific composer of opera. He wrote 39 of them between 1810 and 1829, raising the standards of both comic and serious opera in Italy. Among his most famous today are *The Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella*, *Otello* and his final opera, *William Tell*. Although Rossini retired from composing for the stage after *William Tell*'s premiere, he continued writing, producing many songs, piano, and chamber works. His comic opera, *L'italiana in Algeri* (The Italian Girl in Algiers) was written in an extraordinarily short period of time, regardless of who's telling the story - between 18 (according to Rossini) and 27 (everyone else) days in 1813. The story of the opera is wild, featuring mistaken identities, love triangles, and exotic settings. The lively fun is reflected throughout today's concert opener: fake-outs, building hilarity, inside jokes and a rousing close - all cementing Rossini's place as the King of Opera Overtures.

Concerto No. 2 in B minor for Double Bass and Orchestra

Giovanni Bottesini

Born: December 22, 1821 – Crema, Italy

Died: July 7, 1889 – Parma, Italy

Piece Length: Approximately 18 minutes.

Giovanni Bottesini, one of the greatest virtuosic double bass players of the 19th century, began his musical life not playing the double bass but the violin. When he applied to the Milan Conservatory in hopes of being awarded a scholarship on the instrument, he was told that there were only two positions available: bassoon and double bass. Determined to gain entrance to the conservatory, he picked up the double bass and within a few weeks was admitted with a scholarship, later winning a major prize for his solo playing. This prize helped him launch a tour throughout Europe and the United States, impressing listeners with his phenomenal talent and earning Bottesini the nickname "the Paganini of the double bass." The comparisons to Paganini go beyond each man's virtuosity on their respective instruments. Both also composed numerous works that expanded both the technical and lyrical possibilities of their instruments, and Bottesini's Concerto No. 2 is an excellent example of this. Bottesini's work as both an opera conductor and pit bassist are evident in his writing; once the soloist begins playing, they're rarely allowed to stop. The approach is akin to an opera star, already on their fifth aria encore - ready and willing to launch into another display of beauty, technique, and firepower.

Suite No. 1 from *Ancient Airs and Dances*

Ottorino Respighi

Born: July 18, 1879 – Bologna, Italy

Died: April 18, 1936 – Rome, Italy

Piece Length: Approximately 15 minutes.

Ottorino Respighi was one of the most performed Italian composers from the early part of the 20th century, best known today for his three brilliant orchestral tone poems about Rome: *Fountains of Rome*, *Pines of Rome*, and *Roman Festivals*. Besides his work as a composer, pianist, violinist, and teacher, Respighi was also an important musicologist who specialized in the music of the Renaissance and Baroque eras. This Suite No. 1 from *Ancient Airs and Dances* is an exquisite example of his fascination with the Renaissance. Each movement is an orchestration of early lute music, including pieces by Simone Molinaro and Vincenzo Galilei. The result – part transcription, part transformation – is at times joyous, achingly beautiful, boisterous, thoughtful, and overwhelmingly bright. It is also equally as fun for the orchestra to play, as the audience to hear.

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770 – Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827 – Vienna, Austria

Piece Length: Approximately 28 minutes.

Symphony No. 8 was composed in 1812 during a tumultuous time in Beethoven's life. He was trying – unsuccessfully – to prevent his brother Nikolaus Johann's marriage to Therese Obermeyer. Beethoven didn't approve of Obermeyer, who had an illegitimate daughter; the attempted interference would drive a rift between the two brothers evident through the rest of their lives. Beethoven's turmoil was also internal – it was during this time that he wrote his famous "Immortal Beloved" letter, a passionate declamation whose addressee is still unknown today. As if this wasn't enough, the hearing loss that began years earlier continued to get worse, threatening his very livelihood as a musician. The Symphony No. 8, however, reveals none of this turbulence. Instead, the Eighth is the epitome of good humor, of tongue-in-cheek composition. Beethoven himself drove the transformation of the symphony through his playful, unexpected takes on the Minuet and Trio. What had been an elegant dance in three evolved to a Scherzo, quite literally meaning "joke" or "prank." Beethoven would take that spirit and imbue the entire Eighth Symphony with it. Indeed, this symphony is light-hearted, charming, and showcases Beethoven's humor through constantly unexpected twists and turns of harmony and meter, keeping the listener on their toes. Beethoven was particularly fond of this work, referring to it as "my little Symphony in F" to distinguish it from the Symphony No. 6, and when asked by his student Carl Czerny why he thought the Symphony No. 8 was not as well received as the more famous 7th, Beethoven replied "That's because it is so much better."

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