



OMAHA  
SYMPHONY

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2024/25 SEASON

## Dvořák & Elgar

February 21-22, 2025 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Alasdair Neale, conductor | Oliver Herbert, cello

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

Concerto in B minor for Violoncello &  
Orchestra, Op. 104, B. 191

I. Allegro

II. Adagio ma non troppo

III. Finale: Allegro moderato

*Oliver Herbert, cello*

### INTERMISSION

EDWARD ELGAR

Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major, Op. 55

I. Andante; nobilmente e semplice – Allegro

II. Allegro molto

III. Adagio

IV. Lento - Allegro

**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





**Alasdair Neale** is the Music Director of the Sun Valley Music Festival (SVMF). The 2025 season will mark thirty-one years at the helm of the Festival (formerly Sun Valley Summer Symphony). As Music Director of the SVMF, Mr. Neale has propelled this festival to national status: it is now the largest privately funded free admission symphony in America. Among the many celebrated guest artists that Mr. Neale has brought to this festival are Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Renée Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, Audra McDonald, Midori, Itzhak Perlman, Gil Shaham, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Yuja Wang and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

In 2024, Mr. Neale completed his five-year tenure as Music Director of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. His appointment came after an extensive international search and marked for him a return to the city where he lived, studied and began his professional career more than 30 years prior.

In 2023, Alasdair Neale celebrated his 22nd and final year as Music Director of the Marin Symphony. After he assumed the post in 2001, Mr. Neale was hailed for invigorating the orchestra and establishing it as one of the finest in the Bay Area. Under Mr. Neale's direction, the Marin Symphony was chosen as one of several distinguished orchestras to participate in Magnum Opus, a groundbreaking, decade-long commissioning project bringing new music to the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Osvaldo Golijov, Kevin Puts, Kenji Bunch, David Carlson, and Avner Dorman were among the composers represented in the project.

Mr. Neale's appointment with the Marin Symphony followed 12 years as Associate Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony and Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. During that time, he conducted both orchestras in hundreds of critically acclaimed concerts both here and abroad. Under Mr. Neale's direction, the Youth Orchestra became one of the finest young ensembles in the world, receiving consistent rave reviews for performances in San Francisco, as well as on tour in Amsterdam, Leipzig, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Dublin, Copenhagen, and Vienna.

From 2001 to 2011, Mr. Neale served as Principal Guest Conductor of the New World Symphony. From 2001 to 2014, he served on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He has guest conducted numerous orchestras around the world, including the New York Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Saint Louis Symphony, Houston Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Seattle Symphony, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Honolulu Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Colorado Symphony, Nashville Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Florida Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lyon, Sydney Symphony, Real Filharmonia de Galicia, l'Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand-Montréal, Radio Sinfonie Orchester Stuttgart, Auckland Philharmonia, Orchestra of St. Gallen (Switzerland), MDR Leipzig, NDR Hannover, Trondheim Symphony, Orchestre du Capitole de Toulouse, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, and at the Aspen Music Festival. In March 2002, he collaborated with director Peter Sellars and composer John Adams to open the Adelaide Festival with a production of the oratorio *El Niño*.

Mr. Neale's discography includes a recording of Aaron Jay Kernis' *Colored Field* with the San Francisco Symphony, featuring English horn player Julie Ann Giacobassi which won France's Diapason d'or award following its release. He may also be heard on New World Records conducting the ensemble Solisti New York in a recording of new flute concertos. Alasdair Neale appears on the Bay Brass recording *Sound the Bells*, released in March 2011 on the Harmonia Mundi label and nominated for a GRAMMY for Best Small Ensemble Performance.

# Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst



**Oliver Herbert is a concert cellist** with a rapidly growing international presence. The recipient of a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant, Oliver's natural musicianship and connective performances are carving a unique path in the world of music.

As a soloist, Oliver has appeared with world renowned orchestras including the San Francisco Symphony and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, working with conductors such as Michael Tilson Thomas, Juanjo Mena, and Alexander Shelley. His work is fueled by a passion for music ranging from past centuries to the present, with concerto performances spotlighting works from C.P.E. Bach to Haydn, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Ibert, Elgar, Barber, Shostakovich, Schnittke, Lutoslawski, and Vasks, among others.

Working closely with composers, Oliver has commissioned several works including Andrew Moses' *Ecstatic Immanence* for cello, percussion, and electronics which was premiered at the 2023 TICA Festival, Hong Kong. At the 2023 Kronberg Festival, Oliver gave the world premiere of Žibuoklė Martinaitytė's new solo cello work, *Spiral Spins*. In recent seasons, his projects have included performances of the complete Bach Cello Suites at Capital Region Classical and the complete Beethoven Cello Sonatas at Guarneri Hall in Chicago.

Oliver's recital engagements have brought him across the United States to venues such as the Ravinia Festival and Kravis Center, as well as on tour to Greece, Germany, and Hong Kong. His programs are known for combining beloved with lesser-known works, contextualizing them with equal advocacy and commitment.

Oliver appears regularly at leading chamber music festivals and venues such as the Rheingau Festival, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Marlboro, La Jolla SummerFest, Verbier Festival, ChamberFest Cleveland, 92nd Street Y, and the Ravinia Festival. He has performed with luminaries such as Mitsuko Uchida and Tabea Zimmermann.

Oliver's recordings include a release of Haydn's D Major Concerto with the San Francisco Symphony and Michael Tilson Thomas by Warner Classics as part of highlights of MTT's final season as music director. In June of 2020, Oliver released his debut album with pianist Xiaohui Yang, *Frame of Mind: Fauré and Janáček*, featuring the two cello and piano sonatas of Gabriel Fauré, as well as Leoš Janáček's *Pohádka* (Fairy Tale).

Oliver is the recipient of the 2017 Verbier Festival's Jean-Nicolas Firmenich Prize, as well as top prizes in the Lutoslawski International Cello Competition, Klein Competition, and Stulberg Competition. He has been featured on PBS's *Now Hear This*, NPR's *From the Top*, the popular online interview series, *Living the Classical Life*, and more.

Oliver is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Colburn School, where he studied with Carter Brey, Pamela Frank, Clive Greensmith, and Peter Wiley. He is now a student of Frans Helmerson in the professional studies program at the Kronberg Academy, generously funded by the Nanno Lenz patronage. He plays on a Guadagnini cello that belonged to the great Italian cellist Antonio Janigro, on generous loan from the Janigro family.

## **Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104, B. 191**

### **Antonín Dvořák**

Born: September 8, 1841 – Nelahozeves, Czechia, Austrian Empire

Died: May 1, 1904 – Prague, Czechia, Austria-Hungary

*Piece Length: Approximately 40'.*

Dvořák's cello concerto was the last of his three solo concertos, preceded by works for the piano and violin. He had been appealed to by multiple cellists, including the legendary Hanuš Wihan, yet Dvořák found it difficult to imagine the instrument as a soloist – until he heard the premiere of Victor Herbert's Cello Concerto No. 2. Best known as the composer of *Babes in Toyland*, Herbert's work inspired Dvořák to fulfill Wihan's request for a new concerto. Work went quickly; Dvořák began on November 8, 1894, and completed it a little over three months later on February 9. The concerto is a study of longing and loss – during his time in the United States, Dvořák was terribly homesick and missed his children – but it is also a triumph, considered one of the greatest pieces of all time. As Brahms said, "If I had known it was possible to compose such a concerto for cello, I would have done it myself."

## **Symphony No. 1 in A-flat Major, Op. 55**

### **Edward Elgar**

Born: June 2, 1857 – Broadheath, United Kingdom

Died: February 23, 1934 – Worcester, United Kingdom

*Piece Length: Approximately 50'.*

While today we might see Elgar as a quintessential composer of the Victorian era, artistically he was strongly influenced by the music on the European continent. In his youth, Elgar worked numerous jobs as a violinist throughout Worcester, England - including playing in the first violins during the Three Choirs Festival in 1884, when Dvořák was guest conductor. Elgar would produce his own masterpieces at the turn of the 20th century, cementing his place among the great Romantic composers. 1899's *Enigma Variations* was followed by the oratorio *The Dreams of Gerontius* and his *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, and in 1908, the first of Elgar's two symphonies was premiered by the Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Hans Richter. It was described by a critic at the premiere as an "immediate and phenomenal success." That might be an understatement: the work was such an instant hit that over a hundred performances of the symphony were given within its first year of existence. In his 50s when Symphony No. 1 was written, Elgar had spent decades hoping for the capacity to take on such a project. He believed "that the symphony without a programme is the highest development of art," and this first offering "[has] no programme beyond a wide experience of human life with a great charity (love) and a massive hope in the future."