



**OMAHA
SYMPHONY**

Ankush Kumar Bahl, Music Director

program notes

2024/25 SEASON

The Music of Tina Turner

January 17-18, 2025 | 7:30 p.m.

Holland Performing Arts Center

Ernest Richardson, conductor | LaKisha Jones, vocals

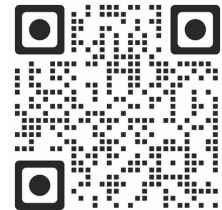
Nova Y. Payton, vocals | Matthew Johnson, vocals

Selections to be announced from stage.

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



Ernest Richardson, conductor

Ernest Richardson is in high demand as conductor, composer, arranger, organizational leader and inspirational speaker. His versatility finds him within one season conducting Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* or Broadway artists in the works of Leonard Bernstein, a live-to-movie production of *Harry Potter*, facilitating strategic decision-making for leading arts organizations, or training young musicians for the passionate, persistent pursuit of perfection.

He has been at the forefront of symphonic video/live music productions, conducting live-to-movie scores of the *Harry Potter* series with CineConcerts, *Indiana Jones*, *Jurassic Park*, *Back to the Future*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Casablanca*, *Ratatouille*, *Star Trek* (2009), the Charlie Chaplin silent film *The Gold Rush*, and *Star Wars*.

In addition to his post in Omaha, Richardson holds the position of music director and principal conductor of the Steamboat Symphony Orchestra in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. During his tenure, the organization has grown from a community orchestra to a resident professional orchestra, attracting the finest musicians from the Front Range of Colorado. He is also the founding artistic director and CEO of the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory.



Featured Artists



LaKisha Jones, vocals

Best known to millions of TV viewers as a top four finalist during the 2007 season of *American Idol*, LaKisha Jones is ready to reclaim center stage in music, theatre and television.

Having worked with hit-making songwriters and producers including Tony Nicholas (Patti LaBelle, Luther Vandross), Ro & Sauce (Brandy, Ne-Yo) and Greg Curtis (Keyshia Cole, Yolanda Adams), Jones' album *So Glad I'm Me* featured a spirited mix of R&B and soul. A few noteworthy songs included the single "Same Song," penned by award-winning songwriter Dianne Warren, Whitney Houston's "You Give Good Love," the gospel song "Just as I Am," and Jones' soaring ballad to her daughter, "Beautiful Girl."



Nova Y. Payton, vocals

Chances are that you've heard the amazing soprano voice of Nova Y. Payton in internationally staged musicals, on PBS in one of the specials with The American Pops Orchestra or *3 Mo' Divas* or in countless regional theatre productions across the country. Boasting a prolific catalog of artist collaborations, the former American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) student has shared the stage with Stevie Wonder, Roberta Flack, Levi Kreis, Bobby McFerrin, John Michael Higgins, Yolanda .

Adams, Betsy Wolfe, Michael Urie, Anthony Hamilton, and Michelle Williams. She has also opened for heavyweights like Ashford and Simpson, Will Downing, Stephanie Mills, Melba Moore, The Chi-Lites and the Dramatics. Nova has performed in over 150 major cities in the US, as well as Canada, Japan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Europe.

Nova has been recognized with nominations and awards for her talents. Nova starred in a soul-stirring rendition of Effie White in *Dreamgirls*, which earned her the 2006 Barrymore nomination for Outstanding Leading Actress in a Musical. The DVD / CD for *3 Mo' Divas* received a 2010 NAACP nomination for Outstanding Duo, Group or Collaboration. In 2012, Nova was honored as the Helen Hayes Award Recipient for Best Supporting Actress in a Resident Musical for her portrayal of MotorMouth Maybelle in *Hairspray*.



Matthew Johnson, vocals

The multi-talented Matthew Johnson is an actor, singer, dancer, and musician who has performed with the likes of Pharrell, John Legend, Jennifer Lopez, Childish Gambino, and Stevie Wonder. His musical theater roots were cultivated at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, and through his mentor, Debbie Allen, who helped mold him into the triple threat performer he is today. Matthew has done vocal arrangements for the GRAMMY Awards as well as performed at the Emmys and the Billboard Awards.

He honed his skills as a vocal chameleon on some of the world's most watched television shows such as *American Idol*, *The Voice*, *X Factor* and *Late Night with James Corden*. He's shared the stage and studio with some of Hollywood's biggest names including Kelly Clarkson, Sam Smith, Demi Lavato, and Jennifer Hudson. On the big screen, Matthew stars as Mack in Warner Brother's *Christmas on the Square* starring Dolly Parton and Christine Baranski, which won an Emmy Award in 2021.