



Rota & Schumann

Sunday, April 6, 2025 | 2 p.m.

Witherspoon Concert Hall | The Joslyn

Ankush Kumar Bahl, conductor | Nicholas Nelson, bassoon

MICHAEL GANDOLFI

Themes from a Midsummer Night

I. Air (Oberon in Flight)

II. Theseus' Law

III. Hermia's Helter Skelter Scherzo

IV. Hermia and Lysander

V. Bottom Brays

VI. Sly Puck

VII. Titania's Fairies

VIII. Time Dream

IX. Postlude (The Most Gentle)

NINO ROTA

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

I. Toccata

II. Recitativo

III. Andantino

Nicholas Nelson, bassoon

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 38 (Spring)

I. Andante un poco maestoso – Allegro molto vivace

II. Larghetto

III. Scherzo: Molto vivace

IV. Allegro animato e grazioso

Featured Artists



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.

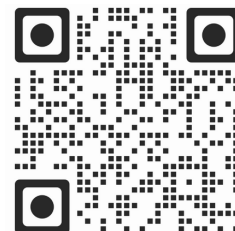
Highlights of previous classical series guest engagements include performances with the New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Houston Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Florida Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, Orquesta Sinfonica Municipal (São Paulo), Richmond Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic, and the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, D.C.). Summer festival appearances engagements include the Copenhagen Philharmonic at Tivoli, Sun Valley Summer Symphony, Wintergreen Summer Music Festival, Chautauqua Institute, Wolf Trap with the NSO, the Brevard Music Center, and the Mostly Modern Festival. An experienced collaborator, Bahl has worked with many prominent soloists, among them Daniil Trifonov, Lang Lang, Emanuel Ax, Sarah Chang, Lara St. John, Karen Gomyo, Stella Chen, Aaron Diehl, Bhezod Abduraimov, Benjamin Grosvenor, Orion Weiss, Conrad Tao, Charlie Albright, Anthony McGill, Kelley O'Connor, Philadelphia Orchestra Concertmaster David Kim, and Vesko Eschkenazy, concertmaster of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

A protégé of former New York Philharmonic Music Director Kurt Masur, he served as his assistant conductor at the Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. From 2011 to 2015, he was assistant conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach, leading a variety of concerts with the orchestra in over 100 performances. Bahl has been fortunate to also count Maestros Jaap van Zweden, Zdenek Macal, David Zinman, and Gianandrea Noseda among his mentors.

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



Program Notes

by Mathew Fuerst



Nicholas Nelson joined the Omaha Symphony as **assistant principal and second bassoon** in September of 2016. Previously he held positions and performed with orchestras and festivals across Texas, the Midwest, and Canada. He holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, Northwestern University, and Cleveland Institute of Music where he studied with Kristin Wolfe Jensen, Christopher Millard, and John Clouser respectively.

Nick enjoys performing frequently as a chamber musician with the Omaha Chamber Music Society and the Bassoons Across Nebraska bassoon quartet. Prior to joining the Omaha Symphony he lived in Austin, TX as a freelancer and private teacher.

Themes from a Midsummer Night

Michael Gandolfi

Born: July 5, 1956 – Melrose, Massachusetts

Piece Length: Approximately 20 minutes.

Notes by the composer:

Themes from a Midsummer Night is a concert-suite adaptation of a portion of the music that I composed for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by The Shakespeare and Company, directed by Tina Packer. The play was performed during July and August of 2001 at The Mount, (at the Edith Wharton Estate) in Lenox, Massachusetts. The music, which was recorded by fellows of the Tanglewood Music Center, was used primarily as underscoring for key characters and scenes. The order of the movements of this suite is based solely on musical considerations, and does not trace the chronology of the play.

Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra

Nino Rota

Born: December 3, 1911 – Milan, Italy

Died: April 10, 1979 – Rome, Italy

Piece Length: Approximately 17 minutes.

An extraordinarily prolific composer, Nino Rota composed music for over 170 films. He is perhaps best known for *The Godfather Parts I and II* and Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. While his name is most associated with film scores, he also composed numerous concert works for chamber ensemble and orchestra, as well as eleven operas. One of his final completed scores is the Concerto for Bassoon, composed between 1974 and 1977. Each of the movements of this concerto takes inspiration from Baroque forms, although Rota's harmonic palate is clearly twentieth century. The true muse is the tremendous range of the bassoon, both in color and technique, but glorious tone, melodic capabilities, and – often – sense of humor.

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat Major (“Spring”), Op. 38

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810 – Zwickau, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856 – Eendenich, Bonn, Germany

Piece Length: Approximately 30 minutes.

Robert Schumann composed his Symphony No. 1 (“Spring”) in a remarkably short period of time, sketching out the work over a span of four days in the first month of 1841 and completing the orchestration on February 20 of that same year. This was – incredibly – in preparation for the premiere, conducted on March 31, 1841, by Felix Mendelssohn leading the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Prior to 1841, Schumann’s creative work had been limited to solo piano pieces and songs. In fact, just the year prior, Schumann produced some of his more enduring song cycles, including *Frauenliebe und Leben* (“Woman’s Love and Life”) and *Dichterliebe* (“Poet’s Love”). During that year he was also able to marry Clara Weick - herself a brilliant pianist and composer - after a long legal struggle. Symphony No. 1 was Schumann’s first composition for orchestra. It is a remarkable achievement in its incredible formal design and melodic richness. The symphony seems to overflow with the optimism that Schumann must have felt at this time in his life. While the symphony itself is not programmatic, there are hints as to what Schumann was trying to express in the original titles for each movement, which were later discarded: I. “Spring’s Awakening,” II. “Evening,” III. “Gay Playfellows,” and IV. “Spring’s Farewell.” It is undoubtedly a triumph, and a perfect start to spring.

© 2025, Mathew Fuerst