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### **Take A Trip to the Wonderful World of Animals**

VSA Orchestra closes their 47<sup>th</sup> season with an Earth Day concert  
featuring the Valley Youth Orchestra

Montrose, CO – The Valley Symphony Association (VSA) Orchestra will take a multigenerational approach to celebrate Earth Day and the final concert of their 47th season on Sunday, April 22, 3 p.m. at the Montrose Pavilion. Under the direction of Mike Kern, the VSA Orchestra will feature the Valley Youth Symphony (VYO), and together they will take the audience on “A Trip to the Wonderful World of Animals.”

Kids of all ages can relate to the theme of an imaginary tour of animals, where the entire concert centers around animals associated with every piece. Some songs literally depict what an animal sounds like, while other pieces offer a nuanced theme about an animal or group of animals. The performance will highlight a variety of different genres and contrasting styles, including classical, big band, pop, movie music, and swing. Selections include “The Pink Panther,” “Baby Elephant Walk,” “The Theme from Angry Birds,” “Highlights from How to Train Your Dragon,” “Selections from The Carnival of Animals Suite,” and “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”

The VSA will welcome the VYO as guests at this combined concert, which will bring together 88 musicians, who range in age from 5 to 91.

The VYO nurtures string musicians from 5 to 18, who make up three string orchestras (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) that comprise the youth organization. Their Director/Conductor Debra TenNapel of Montrose, who has served as the VSA’s concertmaster since 2005, explained that the concert will culminate with two pieces played by the

adult and youth ensembles combined, which required a “massive” amount of planning and adaptation by VSA Director Mike Kern.

When bringing together an ensemble of such varying ages and abilities, adjustments need to be made to accommodate the musical capacity and needs of a 5 year-old versus a student in high school or junior high, especially if they are accustomed to playing in a more intimate ensemble. “Mike took an entire day to rewrite and adjust parts for the wide variety of ages in the VYO so that all the kids could play together with the VSA for the last two pieces,” TenNapel said. “It was a lot of work and my pleasure to write parts to accommodate everyone so that all the musicians can appear on stage together,” Kern said.

TenNapel is grateful to Kern and excited to present the concert to the community. “This coming together on stage for such a fun concert shows how ageless, timeless, and inclusive music is, and I think it is really special and exciting for the region.”

Both directors agree that exposing young musicians to playing with a full symphony and not just a smaller string-only ensemble is important, and TenNapel is thrilled for her young instrumentalists. “Having the experience of playing together in such a large group can provide these musicians with a new lease on what they might want to do with their instrument, and when kids who don’t play an instrument come to a concert, they can see themselves on stage, too,” she said.

TenNapel and her family moved to Colorado in 2005. Her rich professional musical resume as a performer and instructor started in the mid-1980s and includes touring the former Soviet Union on a music exchange and performing on stage at Carnegie Hall. She is active in performance groups throughout the Western Slope and has a thriving private violin studio in Montrose with upwards of 40 students who range in age from 5 to 70.

“Many people don’t know that strings are not taught in Western Slope schools except for a few in Grand Junction,” TenNapel explained. Along with private instruction, the VYO is the only place where these young musicians can come and grow and thrive as string instrumentalists. “My instructors profoundly affected the trajectory of all aspects of my life,

both with how they played and how they led their lives,” she said. “I can only hope to pay forward the precious gift of their example with my own private students and my VYO charges.”

While the VSA is highly supportive of the VYO, the youth organization is a separate nonprofit entity that is supported financially by faithful donors and sponsors, along with nominal tuition fees and fundraisers that build their coffers. Musically, the group thrives on a helpful and loyal adult community of mentor musicians who work with the students during weekly rehearsals. “Mentors invest in the students by sitting along side the kids, playing their parts with them, and offering instruction when needed or advice on how to do something musically,” TenNapel explained. “Mentors are a great benefit to me as the director, the individual musicians, and the ensemble as a whole.”

Members of the VSA Orchestra also look forward to concerts when they can play alongside the young musicians, too. “It’s really impressive to see how prepared, focused, and talented these kids are, how well-behaved and mature they are,” said VSA Clarinetist Holly Burgess of Montrose. “Our performances together are a real treat, both for us and the audience.”

Some people might shy away from a concert featuring such seemingly inexperienced performers, but TenNapel emphasized that the quality the youthful musicians produce is far beyond what might be expected of a young group. “I know what beginner orchestras sound like, but with the VYO, you are hearing good stuff, quality music,” she said. “There is a different level of commitment with this group — they amaze me with how hard they work, how good they sound, and how well they perform,” TenNapel related. “In eight years as the director, never have we had one problem with how kids treat each other or any of the adults involved — it’s a beautiful thing.”

For information, upcoming concerts, the audition process, and tickets, visit the VSA on Facebook @valleysymphonyassociation and at ValleySymphony.net. Tickets are also available in Delta at Clubb’s and in Montrose at DeVinnie Jewelers and the Pavilion.

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### ***About the Valley Youth Orchestra***

The VYO began in January 1999 to provide a rich orchestral experience for young string musicians from Western Colorado's Uncompahgre Valley (Montrose, Ouray, and Delta Counties), North Fork of Delta County (Paonia, Hotchkiss and Crawford) and the Grand Valley (Grand Junction, Fruita and Clifton). Through the VYO, musicians experience the joys and challenges of orchestral rehearsals and performances in a nurturing environment. Kids from 5 to 18 make up the three string orchestras (beginner, intermediate, and advanced students) that comprise the VYO.