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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Longtime VSA Orchestra Conductor Announces Retirement

Montrose, CO –The Board of Directors of the Valley Symphony Association confirmed today that long-time VSA Orchestra Conductor Michael J. Kern has announced that he will be retiring at the end of season 50 in April.

Kern has been conducting the VSA Orchestra since 1993. He is a graduate of Butler University (Indianapolis, IN) with a bachelor's degree in music education and a master's degree in music composition.

He will conduct the final concerts of the VSA's Jubilee Season (Saturday, April 23, 2022, at 7:30pm, and Sunday, April 24, 2022, at 3pm) at the Montrose Pavilion. The theme, "Let's Dance!" will speak to the unity among the arts and how they draw on each other for inspiration: the concert will showcase dance styles through the ages and feature live dance performances.

"I have enjoyed seeing the orchestra grow in numbers and ability in my 27+ years as the conductor," Kern said. "I had only directed an orchestra during conducting class in college, and while my familiarity with bands helped, working with strings is a whole other matter!"

"While we respect Mike's decision and are happy for him, we're sad for us, as it's truly the end of an era," VSA Board President Hartland H. Clubb, Jr., said. "He's dedicated over a quarter-century to the organization and grown tremendously as its conductor; what he's accomplished and given in service to our regional community is no small thing."

In reminiscing about his years spent as the VSA conductor, Kern said, "Judging an ensemble's capability is something learned over time, and understanding the diverse backgrounds of the musicians in your charge is no easy task. It takes patience and caring, and I do care deeply for the musicians whom I conduct. Many have become good friends. I really do appreciate and love them all."

The VSA is in the midst of its milestone 50th season. A regional all-volunteer performing arts organization, the VSA supports musicians of all ages and walks of life who hail from throughout the Western Slope, including the Uncompahgre, Grand, and North Fork Valleys.

Kern acknowledged the unique and special nature of having such a cultural organization in the region and how it all hinges on the willingness of volunteer musicians to selflessly share their gifts. “Our musicians give so much to the VSA: they all have lives to live yet dedicate themselves to our orchestra. As volunteer musicians, they donate their time to rehearse, practice, and perform with the talent they have personally cultivated for years, if not decades,” Kern said.

“I thank all board members—past and present—for encouraging and helping me reach a certain level of accomplishment with the orchestra,” Kern said. “I feel that I am leaving the orchestra in a good position and trust that the next conductor will continue to grow this ensemble musically toward more and more proficiency that brings a larger audience to classical music.”

The VSA board will announce the selection process for the next orchestra conductor in the coming months.

The VSA’s goal is to ensure that future generations will enjoy the legacy of live orchestral and choral music that so magnificently celebrates the human spirit. To continue to make the music happen, Kern encouraged the regional community, “...[to] please continue to offer your support to the wonderful musicians who make up this organization through your attendance at concerts and being generous with your support.”

“We have accomplished more than I could dream of those many years ago” Kern said. “The VSA Orchestra is a very good community orchestra, and many other community orchestras would be happy to be in our position! I wish all the success in the world to the VSA and its members.”

For information, upcoming concerts and news on our 2022-2023 season, the audition process, and tickets, visit the VSA on Facebook @valleysymphonyassociation or at ValleySymphony.org. Tickets are available in Delta at Clubb’s (502 Main St) and in Montrose at Colorado Smiles (601 S 3rd St). Other inquiries may be directed to 970-275-8676 or info@ValleySymphony.org.