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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bringing Classical Music to Life: VSA Announces Orchestra Conductor Finalists; Audience Participation is Part of Selection Process

Montrose, CO –The Valley Symphony Association orchestra conductor search committee has narrowed the field of finalists from throughout the US and Europe to three individuals: Troy Raper from Grand Junction CO, Charlotte Ruth Harrison from Orem UT, and Steven Aguilo-Arbues from Denver CO.

The search committee is made up of VSA musician members and chaired by Charles Latshaw, music director of the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra and Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra.

“It has been a thorough process, vetting candidates to take the helm of the VSA,” Latshaw said. The committee has been working since June, receiving applications, reviewing conducting videos, and interviewing candidates. “The transition from one conductor to another is a great opportunity for the community to evaluate its musical priorities, and choose the person to best take the VSA from where it is to where we want it to be in the future. All three of these candidates have great potential to thrive and grow with the VSA.”

The VSA’s Season 51 launched in September and introduced a new performance schedule of quarterly concerts, with both the orchestra and chorus performing at all concerts. Finalists will each guest conduct one of the remaining concerts in December, February, and April. This season each concert includes both a Saturday and Sunday performance at the Montrose Pavilion. The VSA chorus is under the baton of Katy Kristoffersen, in her second year as chorus conductor.

In addition to gathering musician surveys, part of the selection process will be encouraging audience input immediately following each performance. “We hope audiences will be excited to attend all three shows and participate in this exciting process,” VSA Board President Hartland H. Clubb, Jr. said. “This decision is an important one—one that will help us continue to bring classical music to life on the Western Slope.” Feedback will be compiled to help the committee reach a decision in May, when they expect to announce the new conductor.

December

“Christmas by Candlelight: A Colorado Christmas” concerts (December 3 at 7:30pm and December 4 at 3pm) will be guest conducted by musician, educator, and Colorado native Troy Raper. He began his teaching career in 1988 and is in his first year of retirement after 31 years in education. He received his bachelor’s in music education from the University of Northern

Colorado and his master's degree in education from Lesley University with an emphasis in educational technology. Throughout his career, Raper's school orchestras were consistently awarded superior ratings at music festivals from Palisade to Disneyland. Many former students are now accomplished professional teachers and performers around the country.

As a member of the musical community on the Western Slope, Raper has spent countless hours developing and nurturing a community of former students, colleagues, and professional relationships. He believes in the accessibility of music to everyone: from the youngest students to professionals, there is a place for everyone in the arts.

"During my years as a conductor in the Grand Valley, I have had many students, young and old, perform in the VSA Orchestra, so getting a chance to work with this outstanding music organization in this setting is a tremendous honor," Raper said.

As an active advocate in Colorado for teaching, Raper spent 10 years as chair/board member for the Colorado All State Orchestra Governing Board. He has also served as a board member of the Colorado Chapter of the American String Teachers Association, and as a member of the Colorado Music Educators Association state board. Raper currently serves as production manager and librarian to the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra (GJSO). As an accomplished musician with broad performing experience, he has played with orchestras and for festivals all over the west and sits as principal bassist for the GJSO.

February

The February "Young Composers: Be Inspired!" concerts will be guest conducted by Charlotte Ruth Harrison. Born and raised in Utah, Harrison studied oboe performance with Dr. GERALYN GIOVANNETTI at Brigham Young University and graduated *magna cum laude*. She earned a master of music specializing in orchestral conducting from the University of Texas at Arlington under the tutelage of Dr. Clifton Evans. She is an active conductor, oboist, educator, singer, and pianist. Her musical studies have spanned genres and ensemble types including Baroque, classical, contemporary, jazz, chorale, and more.

"I am delighted to join the Valley Symphony Orchestra and Chorus to explore and celebrate music from young and growing composers," Harrison said. "Whether you are coming to extend your knowledge of classical and contemporary music, or to enjoy a night of beautiful melodies, this will be a concert you won't want to miss."

Most recently, Harrison held the position of assistant conductor and librarian for the UTA Symphony Orchestra from 2020-2022. Before this she conducted the BYU Group for New Music from fall 2019 to spring 2020. She has also guest conducted several community orchestra rehearsals including the Utah Philharmonic Orchestra and the New Texas Symphony Orchestra. Mrs. Harrison has also had the privilege of working with many of the country's finest conducting educators in masterclasses including Marin Alsop, Dianne Wittry, John Farrer, Edward Cumming, Mark Laycock, Dirk Brosse, and Salvatore DiVittorio. She was chosen as one of two finalists for the Respighi prize in conducting at the New York Conducting Workshop and conducted the Chamber Orchestra of New York in their Memorial Day concert in May 2022.

April

The April “Pop Stars & Superheroes” concerts will be guest conducted by Steven Aguiló-Arbues, who earned his professional studies certificate and master of music degree from the Manhattan School of Music in New York City. He has an active career as a conductor, chorus master, vocal coach, recitalist, and producer, and has performed as a solo and collaborative pianist throughout Spain, Italy, Peru and the United States, including Carnegie Hall in New York City. Aguiló-Arbues has had the privilege of studying under notable conducting pedagogues including Larry Rachleff (Rice University), David Efron (Indiana University), Edoardo Müller (Metropolitan Opera) and David Gilbert (New York Philharmonic). In 2016, he was chosen as an orchestral conducting fellow with the Miami Music Festival.

“Music has the power to engage the mind, stir the heart, and reinvigorate the soul, no matter your age,” Aguiló-Arbues said. “I feel privileged to make great music with the musicians of the VSA and have fun sharing it with the community.”

His love for opera has led him to work on over 70 productions throughout the United States and Italy. He has coached singers who have gone on to sing with opera companies around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Conducting engagements during the 2022/2023 season include concerts with Denver’s Inside the Orchestra, the Central City Opera, Boulder Opera, and Opera Fort Collins. Recent positions include artistic director and conductor for The Renaissance Project Choir (Boulder, CO), music director for Boulder Opera, and program/music director of studio artists at Sarasota Opera, and being appointed to artistic director of Opera Fort Collins.

The VSA supports volunteer musicians of all ages and walks of life who hail from throughout the Western Slope, including the Uncompahgre, Grand, and North Fork Valleys. Founded in 1970, the VSA is celebrating their 51st season.

For information, upcoming concerts, tickets, and the audition process, visit the VSA on Facebook @ValleySymphonyAssociation and online at ValleySymphony.net. Tickets are also available in Delta at Clubb’s (502 Main St), in Montrose at Colorado Smiles (601 S 3rd St) and at season partner Cimarron Wealth Management (1731 E Niagara Rd), and at the door on event days. Other inquiries may be directed to 970-765-8323 or info@ValleySymphony.net.

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Note: if these Dropbox links are broken, please let me know!

Photo 1: PHOTO CREDIT: William Woody

Photo 1: Valley Symphony Association Orchestra & Chorus (2021-2022 – Season 50)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/pjsgrmlokwg1gkn/Season%2050%20VSA%20Orchestra%20%26%20Chorus%20Official%20Photo%20-%20Indoor.jpg?dl=0>

Photo 2: COURTESY PHOTO – Troy Raper - Headshot – December Guest Conductor

https://www.dropbox.com/s/akrx2fhis8g1z7q/Troy_Headshot_cropped.jpg?dl=0

Photo 3: COURTESY PHOTO – Charlotte Ruth Harrison – Headshot – February Guest Conductor

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/2argmv5dim3xqfa/Charlotte%20Ruth%20Harrison%20Headshot.jpg?dl=0>

Photo 4: COURTESY PHOTO – Steven Aguilo-Arbues – Headshot – April Guest Conductor
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/5nbz71789o9leia/Steven%20Aguil%C3%B3-Arbues.jpg?dl=0>

About the Valley Symphony Association

Bringing classical music to life since 1970, the Valley Symphony Association has culturally enriched the community and its members by bringing together some of the best volunteer musicians of all ages from the North Fork, Grand, and Uncompahgre Valleys and throughout the Western Slope to discover and perform works of great composers, past and present. Concerts range from classical orchestral to upbeat pops, from purely instrumental to purely choral, to a combination of both.

About Season Partner *Cimarron Wealth Management*

We strive to simplify your financial life and give you confidence about your future so you can focus on your passions. It starts with the foundation of investment, estate and tax planning discussions, but our passion is honest conversations about purpose, legacy and generosity.