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### **Bringing Classical Music to Life: Meet Inspiring Young Composer Anwen Borgo**

Montrose, CO – The Valley Symphony Association (VSA) presents, “Young Composers: Be Inspired!,” on Saturday, February 4 at 7:30pm and Sunday, February 5 at 3pm. Presented with season partner Cimarron Wealth Management and concert partner Montrose Regional Health, performances celebrating the young composer’s journey, past and present, will be held at the Montrose Pavilion and feature both the orchestra and chorus.

A regional, all-volunteer performing arts organization in its 51st year, the VSA is looking to capture the attention of all families, students, and music lovers to attend their winter concerts.

Over 100 musicians ranging in age from teens to octogenarians share the stage for the VSA’s quarterly concerts this season.

While the orchestra will treat audiences to a creative presentation of movements from the first symphonies of five classical masters, the chorus will look into the contemporary composer’s journey, starting with Western Slope native Anwen Borgo. Her piece, “Something Better,” will be premiered by the chorus at the February concert series.

A freshman at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston MA, Borgo is studying film and video game scoring and performs with the BCSO (Berklee Contemporary Symphony Orchestra) and BMPO

(Berklee Motion Picture Orchestra). While many consider Juilliard the top music school in the United States, Berklee is always uttered in the same breath when it comes to rankings. The difference is that Juilliard's emphasis is on classical music, whereas Berklee is a contemporary music school with the philosophy that music can be best taught through the music of the time.

Her musical journey started outside Ridgeway, where she grew up playing viola with the Valley Youth Orchestras starting in 2014 and joining the VSA Orchestra in 2018. As a pre-teen, her very first composition, "Eclipse," was premiered by the VYO in 2017. In February 2020, at the age of 15, two of her pieces, "Egyptian Moon" and "Last Time," were premiered by the VSA Orchestra at their "Kaleidoscope of Local Color" concert.

"As a baby freshman in college studying film composition, writing for a full choir is surprisingly something I haven't done before, and I am so excited to have my piece performed," Borgo said.

Explaining her creative process, she said, "When I compose, after I write the first couple of bars, the piece tends to write itself: I hold on for dear life and attempt to capture everything that my brain decides will come next."

Borgo's familiar method was affected by COVID, however, when she was unable to create as she had in the past. "Whether from stress, anxiety, or grief, I had composition block. 'Something Better' is the piece that broke the block. It's about how a live choir can't be one person but requires many people of such different ranges and styles to unify to create 'something better,' hence, the title of the piece," she said. "Alone we can't do much, but together we can create amazing things."

In speaking to what inspired her to start composing as a pre-teen, she talked of being a musician first. “My favorite thing about playing is listening to everyone else’s part and how mine fits with that, and from there, I wanted to be able to do the same thing, to create a full composition,” she said. “Composing is almost like creating an object, one you get to pick up, look at, slowly mold, and turn into whatever you’d like it to be musically.”

To help young people in the audience get a taste for young Borgo’s passion, there will be an interactive element included at the performance.

“As an added feature to this unique and inspiring concert, we will invite a willing, young audience member to the stage to interactively create and build a composition with members of the orchestra and chorus—live!” VSA Chorus Conductor Katy Kristoffersen said. “Think of it as a musical choose-your-own-adventure!” She explained, “This young person will stand on the conductor’s podium and build a composition with the biggest, live musical toolkit possible. It’s an incredible opportunity to glimpse into the composer’s experience and use the sounds of our fabulous ensemble as paint on a very large musical canvas.”

The Young Composers concert will also feature performances of two other original choral compositions written for the VSA, one by Kristoffersen and another by published composer and member of the VSA Chorus Nathan Howe. Together with Borgo’s piece, the three choral compositions that will be premiered will highlight the arc of contemporary musical composers who are creating in our midst in a special way.

“Anwen is the poster child for this concert,” VSA Communications & Development Director Stacey Ryan said. “She is a Western Slope

native who progressed through the classical music channels available here, which prepared her well for her next steps—at world-renown Berklee—that will undoubtedly lead Anwen to an exciting future in modern music. We're all so proud and inspired by her and excited to have this concert series showcase her alongside other contemporary composers as well as classical giants.”

“From the past, to the present, and into the bright musical future—which is Anwen!—we, the VSA musicians, are inspired by these young composers who give us the music that we love to perform!” Kristoffersen said. “So, on February 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, we look to inspire everyone and hope to see lots of young people in the audience. It'll be a musical experience unlike any the Western Slope has ever seen!”

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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.