

VALLEY SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION

SEASON  54

HERITAGE

2025-2026

OCTOBER-APRIL CONCERT SERIES
MONTROSE PAVILION

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
TROY RAPER

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WELCOME TO SEASON 54 “A HERITAGE OF MUSIC”

JENNIFER COLTON - GENERAL MANAGER



JEN COLTON

Dear Friends of the Valley Symphony Association,

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that I welcome you to Season 54 of the Valley Symphony Association (VSA), my very first as your new General Manager. As I step into this role, I am honored to be part of an organization with such a rich legacy, and I am excited to work alongside the talented musicians, dedicated volunteers, and passionate community supporters who make the Symphony a cultural cornerstone of Colorado's Western Slope.

ABOUT ME

A little about myself, I come to the VSA with a background that blends arts leadership, education, and community engagement. Music and the arts have always been central to my life, not just as a professional pursuit but as a personal passion. I've long believed that the arts are a vital bridge between people, generations, and communities. My journey has included work with nonprofit organizations, leadership roles that emphasized collaboration and growth, and, like so many of you, a deep personal connection to music as a source of inspiration and joy.

Beyond my professional work, I am someone who finds fulfillment in connecting with others, spending time with family and friends, and finding beauty in the everyday. I believe that leadership is not only about planning and strategy but also about listening, sharing stories, and creating opportunities for others to shine. In that way, stepping into this position feels like coming home; because the VSA is not just an organization, it is a multi-generational family.

CONTINUING A LEGACY

Since its founding in 1970, the Valley Symphony Association has thrived on the dedication of volunteer musicians and the generosity of supporters like you. We are unique in that our performers come from across the Uncompahgre, North Fork, Gunnison, and Grand Valleys, representing a tapestry of lives, professions, and experiences. They are teachers, parents, students, farmers, doctors, business owners, retirees, people from every walk of life who bring their passion to the stage. That spirit of community is what drew me to the VSA. We are not just presenting concerts; we are creating transformative, live musical experiences that celebrate who we are and the heritage we share. Each season is a new opportunity to honor the past, celebrate the present, and inspire the future.

SEASON 54: A HERITAGE THEME

This year's theme, "Heritage," could not be more fitting for my first season. Heritage speaks to our roots, to the stories and traditions that shape us, and to the legacy we build for generations to come.

Our programming this season embraces that theme wholeheartedly, bringing together classical masterworks, contemporary selections, and choral-orchestral collaborations that highlight the diversity and depth of our musical tradition. Whether it is a piece that has stood the test of centuries or a new arrangement that speaks to modern audiences, each concert in Season 54 reflects the enduring power of music to connect and inspire.

What excites me most is the way our concerts invite everyone, musicians, audiences, and supporters alike, to take part in something bigger than ourselves. Music has the ability to remind us of where we come from, to celebrate who we are, and to imagine where we might go. That, to me, is the heart of "Heritage."

LOOKING AHEAD

As General Manager, I am committed to ensuring that the VSA not only sustains its legacy but also grows in exciting new ways. That means supporting our musicians with the resources they need, expanding opportunities for youth and community engagement, and strengthening the partnerships that make our work possible. It also means listening to YOU, our loyal audience, so that together we continue to build seasons that are vibrant, meaningful, and deeply rooted in our shared love of music.

Of course, none of this would be possible without you. Your attendance, your applause, your encouragement, and your generosity are what make the Valley Symphony Association thrive. You are the reason our incredible musicians and chorus give their time, energy, and talent so freely. You are the reason we can look forward with confidence to the next 54 years of music-making.

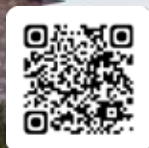
AN INVITATION

As we begin this season together, I invite you to experience not just the notes and rhythms but the spirit of what the Valley Symphony Association represents. Come celebrate our heritage. Bring a friend. Share the joy of live music. Support the musicians who give so much of themselves. And know that by being here, you are part of something lasting and meaningful.

I could not be more excited to share this journey with you. Season 54 is a celebration of where we have been and where we are going. It is a season of gratitude, of joy, and of our combined heritage. Thank you for welcoming me into the VSA family. I look forward to meeting many of you at concerts, hearing your stories, and continuing this extraordinary legacy together.

With gratitude and anticipation,
Jennifer Colton, General Manager

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Music Lovers,

I am honored and excited to be serving as Valley Symphony Association President for Season 54. Much has happened, both challenging and wonderful, over the past year, and I'm grateful to be part of it.

Stacey Ryan, our long-time Communications and Development Director, relocated to Denver. We will miss her passion, knowledge, and hard work in strengthening VSA's financial base. I sincerely hope we will continue to have her clarinet talent in the orchestra from time to time. While Stacey's departure alone would have been enough, Stephanie Helleckson, our Executive Director and violinist, recently took a great full-time opportunity with the Walla Walla Symphony. Stephanie provided strong leadership, coordination, and arts administration talent to help strengthen our processes. Finally, our treasured chorus conductor, Katy Kristoffersen, moved on after last season to devote more time to family and the pursuit of exciting new professional goals. While the departures of Stacey, Stephanie, and Katy created challenges, the show does indeed go on!

VSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Glen Justis	President	Montrose	2024
Cathy Hoffman	Vice President	Montrose	2023
Nona Mayberry	Treasurer	Montrose	2024
Anne Harper	Secretary	Montrose	2024
Brian Jess	Member at Large	Grand Junction	2024
Sue Wilde	Member at Large	Montrose	2025

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONT...

We are delighted to now have Nathan Howe as our new Chorus Conductor. And, in August we added Jennifer Colton as our new full-time General Manager. We moved through a formal search for both positions and had several great candidates. We are grateful that VSA's long history, dedication to excellence, and sense of community make it an attractive home not just for skilled musicians but administrative personnel also. In the midst of these changes, we are grateful to have the continued leadership and talent of Troy Raper as Artistic Director and Conductor. Personally, I have enjoyed getting to know Troy and, like you, I'm excited to hear and see what's next on the VSA stage!

Finally, I want to say a heartfelt "thank you" to our Season and Concert Partners, advertisers, donors, and especially our musicians. You are the ones who enable VSA's great performances and community contributions.

Yours Truly,
Glen Justis, President

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Girts & Ina Krumins
Wilma Lowell
Robert Phillips &
Joan Feters Meikle
Robert & Norma Vold

TROY RAPER

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR

Biography on page 18

ADDITIONAL STAFF

Nate Howe, Chorus Conductor (biography on page 22)

Wendy Neill, Webmaster

Christian Pfretzschner, Stage Manager

Dave Reddish, Production Manager

Kim Sloan, Ad Sales Representative

Sandra Sundstrom, Concertmaster (biography on page 25)

Cara Hampton, Graphic Designer

ANNOUNCING!

THE VALLEY SYMPHONY ENDOWMENT

The Valley Symphony Association (VSA) is thrilled to announce the creation of a perpetual endowment fund, held by Cimarron Wealth Management. This landmark achievement has been made possible through a generous gift from The Jim and Vivian Cheney Trust, received in August 2025.

The VSA Endowment will allow our organization to receive contributions that are professionally managed, ensuring growth and providing a reliable yearly income for the Symphony well into the future. This fund represents stability, vision, and the promise that music will continue to flourish in our valley for generations to come.



VIVIAN CHENEY

HONORING VIVIAN CHENEY

This endowment is particularly meaningful as it honors the legacy of longtime VSA violinist and devoted teacher Vivian Cheney. Vivian, originally from Troy, Kansas, began playing violin at Kansas University and went on to a lifetime of teaching and performing. After relocating to Paonia in 1976, she joined the Valley Symphony, where she played for more than 40 years.

Vivian's story is a testament to dedication and love for music. She spent 50 years as a school teacher, sharing her gift with countless students, and often called Thursday night orchestra rehearsals the highlight of her week. She volunteered with senior citizens, played organ at her church, and treasured her connections with fellow musicians.

In 2019, VSA proudly featured Vivian in our newsletter, celebrating her as the orchestra's longevity award recipient. At that time, she had played violin for an astounding 86 years; 43 of those with the VSA. She fondly recalled rehearsals with just two second violins, a concertmaster's dog in attendance, and the joy of performing with musicians across multiple generations.

A LEGACY IN HARMONY

Vivian's dear friend and longtime stand partner, Nora Kniskern shares this reflection:



VIVIAN CHENEY

"As you know, I was Vivian's stand partner for a number of years. I learned many things from her, not just musical performance things. Vivian had a very positive attitude toward life, and she believed everyone should have the opportunity to enjoy music—whether performing or just appreciating. Vivian was first and foremost a teacher; she enabled her students and friends to enjoy music."

Vivian's legacy is parallel to the mission of the Valley Symphony Association. I am proud of what she has done, and I look forward to what the Valley Symphony will continue to do. We are so fortunate to have this opportunity to reach out and share music!"

WITH GRATITUDE

The Valley Symphony Association is deeply grateful to the Cheney family for their generosity and vision. Their gift ensures that Vivian's passion for teaching and love of music will continue to inspire, sustain, and harmonize with the mission of the VSA far into the future.

Please join us in expressing our heartfelt thanks to Jim and Vivian Cheney for making the Valley Symphony Endowment possible.



JIM & VIVIAN CHENEY

With Gratitude,
Valley Symphony Association

For endowment contributions, please contact us by email at giving@valleysymphony.net or by phone at 970-765-8323.

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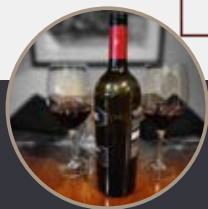
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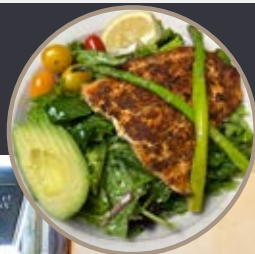
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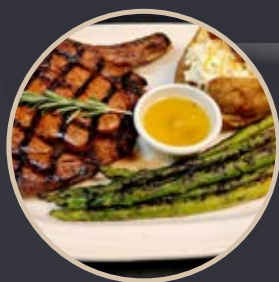
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PRESENTING SEASON 47



POPS 1 - INSIDE THE SNOWGLOBE

A world where snowmen are alive and every note feels like a flurry of holiday magic. The Chorale joins symphony for this holiday tradition.

Saturday | December 13, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | December 14, 2025 | 3:00 pm

The Asteria Theatre

POPS 2 - CRESCENDO - BEWITCHING BROADWAY

A Broadway style evening of film and screen favorites with guest vocalists

Saturday | January 17th, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | January 18th, 2026 | 3:00 pm

The Asteria Theatre

CLASSICS 3 - ONCE UPON A SYMPHONY

GJSO and CWPAC Ballet bring classic Mother Goose Fairy Tales to life with the music of Maurice Ravel.

Saturday | February 7th, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | February 8th, 2026 | **1:00 pm**

The Asteria Theatre

CLASSICS 4 - SOUNDTRACK OF THE LAND

All American musical expedition past stunning musical landscapes featuring Victor Herbert's cello concerto by Jason Pegis.

Saturday | March 7th, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | March 8th, 2026 | 3:00 pm

The Avalon Theatre

CLASSICS 5 - SPELLBOUND

Prokofiev's rebellious virtuosity meets raw intensity as Concertmaster Krinke casts a spellbinding piano performance. Schumann's lush 4th Symphony dazzles, part precision, part magic.

Saturday | March 28th, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | March 29th, 2026 | 3:00 pm

The Asteria Theatre

CLASSICS 6 - HEAVEN MEETS EARTH

Grand Junction Symphony and our full Chorus perform Duruflé's transcendent Requiem.

Saturday | April 25, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Sunday | April 26, 2026 | 3:00 pm

The Asteria Theatre

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- John Wanamaker, Early 1900's American Merchant

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TROY RAPER

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR



TROY RAPER

Troy Raper is a Colorado native and has been teaching in the state since 1988. Mr. Raper received his bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Northern Colorado where he graduated with Honors. Troy received his Master's degree in Education in 2006 from Lesley University with an emphasis in Educational Technology. He retired from Public Education in 2021 after 31 years in education. Troy was the Orchestra and Strings teacher at Palisade High School and Mt. Garfield Middle School in Palisade, CO.

During his long career in public education Mr. Raper's school orchestras has been consistently awarded Superior Ratings at Music festivals from Palisade to Disneyland. Many former students of his program are now accomplished professional teachers and performers around the country. While retired Troy continues to teach Private lessons for aspiring bass students in the area.

As an active advocate for teaching in Colorado, Mr. Raper spent 10 years as Chair/Board Member for the Colorado All State Orchestra Governing Board, helping to create a new charter and direction for the organization. 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. Troy is currently serving as Production Manager and librarian to the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the musical community on the western slope Mr. 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. Troy has recently taken the helm of the Valley Symphony Orchestra in Montrose as their new conductor and Music Director. This all volunteer orchestra was a logical next step in developing the love of music by all under his direction.

TROY RAPER CONT...

Entering his 3rd year as the Artistic Director of the Valley Symphony Association Troy looks forward to developing the orchestra's direction for many years to come. Mr. Raper is an accomplished musician with broad performing experience. He has performed with the Greeley, Ft. Collins, Cheyenne, Durango, and Crested Butte Music Festival orchestras and sits as Principal Bassist for the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra. He performs regularly in various Jazz Bands, recording studios and as a concert soloist. Troy Raper's hobbies and personal interests include spending time with his family, wife Lori, and two adult daughters Mandolyn and Melody. Lori is an accomplished professional artist and teacher and both daughters are developing careers in the arts. He also enjoys arranging music for strings, playing and testing video games, enjoying the open road on motorcycles and remodeling projects of all kinds.

"Music is a gift that requires constant nurturing, and people to share it with. As professionals in the arts, it is our responsibility to share what we do with anyone who will listen. It takes a lot of time, patience, and hard work to have this much fun making music, and it's my hope that those sharing this musical journey with me experience the same joy I do."

VSA ORCHESTRA CONDUCTORS

Walter Birkedahl	1970-1980	Season 1 - 9
Antonia Brico *	11/1978	Season 8
Rodney Ash *	2/1979	Season 8
Rodney Ash	1980-1985	Season 10 - 14
Keith Cochrane	1985-1989	Season 15 - 18
Dr. James, Horton	1989-1993	Season 19 - 22
Michael J. Kern	1993-2022	Season 23 - 50
Scott Betts *	9/2022	Season 51
Troy Raper *	12/2022	Season 51
Charlotte Ruth Harrison *	2/2023	Season 51
Steven Aguilo-Arbues *	4/2023	Season 51
Troy Raper	2023 - 2025	Season 52 - 54

*Guest Conductors

Note: Seasons run from Fall through Spring

SEASON 54 ORCHESTRA ROSTER

FLUTE

Edie Burgess
Deseree Simler
Rosalind Greisz

OBOE

Jennifer Gilmore
Openings Available

CLARINET

Holly Burgess
Lynn Jiron
Reyna Carroll

BASS CLARINET

Karla Miller

BASSOON

Carol Franklin
Openings Available

PIANO

Openings Available

TRUMPET

Dave Reddish
Kendra Sitton
Brian Jess
Openings Available

TROMBONE

Cindy Swanson
Christian Pfretzschner
Whitney Hodges

PERCUSSION

Anne Clayton
Andrew Bruington
Openings Available

FRENCH HORNS

Sheri Williams - Principal
Clint Miller - Assist
Alexis Waltrip
Jeff Williams
Jake Miller
Adrianna Swygman
Stephanie Brauns

SAXOPHONES

Jordan Carls
Toby King

TUBA

Gary Miller

VIOLINS

Sandra Sundstrom - Concertmaster
Rachel King - Principal 2nd
Dorchia Boisen
Aaron Clubb
Dawnell Cook
Talitha Costello
Lois Drysdale
Vince Farnsworth
Laurie Fowler
Chase Houck
Faith Lorenz
DJo Lowell
Julie Martensen
Chris O'Leary
Tasha Pratt
Hannah Wieder
William Zeerip
Openings Available

VIOLA

Julie Appelhanz - Principal
Lane Anderson
Jennifer Asleson
John Fuerst
Dan Lamar
Annabelle Morgan
Carly Wiley
Openings Available

CELLO

Esther Alsum - Principal
Sharon Baker
Brent Helleckson
Jacob Helleckson
Tim Larsen
Philip Morgan
Beth Pertz
Mary Novak
Carissa Reed
Openings Available

CONTRABASS

Laura Payne - Principal
Richard Hansen
Phin Howe
Justin Russell
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NATE HOWE

CHORUS CONDUCTOR



NATE HOWE

Nathan Howe is honored and thrilled to step into the role of chorus conductor for the Valley Symphony Association. A proud Colorado native from Loveland, Nathan brings a rich background in music education and composition to the podium. He began his career teaching choir and orchestra in schools on Colorado's Eastern Plains before moving into higher education, where he helps teachers to complete master's degrees in education and gain licensure to become principals.

Nate is also an acclaimed choral composer and arranger, with works performed by all-state and American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) choirs, as well as in schools and concert venues around the world. His music is published by leading houses including Hal Leonard, Shawnee Press, and MusicSpoke.

A longtime supporter of the VSA, Nate sang with the Chorus for four seasons before taking on this leadership role. He brings a deep admiration for the extraordinary artistry that emerges when dedicated local musicians come together in a spirit of collaboration and joy.

Nate holds a bachelor of music education from the University of Northern Colorado and a master of educational leadership from Western Governors University.

Outside of music, Nate and his wife, Alli, love adventuring across the Western Slope and beyond with their four children; Phin, Eli, Adele, and Atticus.

VSA CHORUS CONDUCTORS

Kelly Neill	2002-2204	Season 31 - 33
Chris Davis	12/2004	Season 34
Aleta Jupille	03/2005	Season 34
Chris Davis	2005-2007	Season 35 - 36
Bethany Ward	12/2007	Season 37
Mary Anne Rathburn	4/2008	Season 37
Bethany Ward	2008-2010	Season 38 - 39
Lenore Hample	2010-2013	Season 40 - 42
Jan Tuin	2013-2017	Season 43 - 46
Allyson Connelly	2017-2019	Season 47 - 49
Katy Kristoffersen	2021-2024	Season 50 - 53
Nate Howe	2025	Season 54

*Guest Conductors

Note: Seasons run from Fall through Spring

SEASON 54 CHORUS ROSTER

SOPRANO

Diane Balk – Montrose
Charlotte Heath – Montrose
Kaitlynn Hurford – Montrose
Julie Laube – Montrose
Linda Moore – Montrose
Carol Mulvaney – Montrose
Mary Redmond – Montrose
Claire Rickey – Montrose
Luanne Svaldi – Montrose
Christine Bloss – Montrose
Deseree Doney – Montrose
Kathy Foglesong – Montrose
Catharine Hoffman – Montrose
Ann Holmes – Montrose
Barbara Krebs – Montrose
Sarah Morales – Montrose
Amiee Rawlings – Montrose
Demeris York – Delta

ALTO

Anne Harper – Montrose
Lorchin Pulsipher – Delta
Brenda Anderson – Cedaredge
Haley Benson – Cedaredge
Jennifer Gilmore – Delta
Brianna Hafen – Montrose
Cheryl Harshman – Montrose
Adelé Howe – Montrose
Danielle Kistler – Montrose
Phillis Schuhmann – Cedaredge
Julie Wakefield – Ouray
Sue Warren – Montrose
Lois Berg-Craig – Montrose
Kristina Brown – Montrose
Melissa Chapple – Montrose
Kim Silva Jones – Montrose
Dianne McCully – Cedaredge
Liz Soler – Montrose
Marka Wellington – Cedaredge

TENOR

Carl Graber – Montrose
Deb Gordon – Montrose
Romeo Icasiano – Montrose
Sam Kevan – Austin
Bonnie Koehler – Delta
Kevin Pulsipher – Delta
Anna Strong – Montrose
Vic Franks – Paonia
Mike Edwards – Ridgway
James Hoffman – Montrose
Judy Lokey – Montrose
Erv Rawlings – Montrose
Vince Snowbarger – Ridgway

BASS

M. Ray Gilbert – Cedaredge
Elijah Howe – Montrose
Keith Laube – Montrose
Bob McCormac – Cedaredge
Daniel Baker – Delta
Steve DeGolier – Montrose
Kelly Thompson – Montrose
James Parks – Montrose
David Quillen – Delta
John Thrasher – Delta

To learn more about joining the
orchestra or chorus, go to page 66 for details.



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SANDRA SUNDSTROM

CONCERTMASTER



SANDRA SUNDSTROM

Sandy grew up in Colorado Springs, CO, in a family of musicians. She was involved in orchestras, choirs, and bands throughout her youth, and earned her bachelor of music in education with an instrumental major and choral minor from Arizona State University. Sandy has taught band, choir, and orchestra in all levels of education, elementary through college.

In 2010, she and her family moved to Grand Junction, and she is the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra (GJSO) Principal Second Violinist. She also plays with High Desert Opera

and Rockestra. She has an active private studio teaching violin, viola, and cello, and her quartet performs in churches and for area events. She plays in regional gigs, performs regularly in Aspen for summer weddings, and is a recurring violin coach for Camp Con Brio. Sandy has adjudicated for the District 51 (D51) Solo/Ensemble, and local auditions, and judged the Colorado West Invitational Music Festival in 2013. She was an active member of the GJSO Board for many years and served on their music director search committee.

In 2013, she started as a paraprofessional in Mesa County School District. Sandy has assisted orchestras at several middle schools, and in 2014, she was a long-term sub for choirs at a local high school. She retired from D51 in the fall of 2023.

Sandy and her husband, Dan, have two daughters, a son, and four grandchildren. They absolutely love living in Grand Junction: the people, surrounding views, and connections they've made.

What is a concertmaster? The concertmaster is the principal or “first chair” violinist who leads the orchestra in its tuning prior to the concert and customarily plays all violin solos within pieces. As the leader of the entire string section, the concertmaster also marks the orchestra's scores with the appropriate bowings to ensure all the strings are moving and playing in unison, and translates instructions from the conductor into specific technical language for strings.



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome back to the Valley Symphony Association! Whether this is your first performance with us or you've been a longtime supporter, thank you, you are the reason we are here. I joined this organization to make a musical difference, to educate, and to share the joy of music across the Western Slope. Along the way, it has given me the opportunity to grow on the podium and to help shape a vibrant orchestral experience for our dedicated volunteer musicians. I often tell my colleagues how remarkable it is to be part of a community-based ensemble where musicians and audiences alike are

united by a shared commitment to making music accessible to everyone. From our production staff and board of

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directors to our front-of-house volunteers, chorus, and orchestra members, every person donates their valuable time and energy to bring you the best performance possible.

Our musicians come from across the region, from Grand Junction to Ouray to Delta to Paonia, and together they embody the true spirit of a community orchestra. I am proud of what this ensemble represents to the communities we serve. Thank you for your support, and I sincerely hope you enjoy the performance!



WELCOME!



At the Valley Symphony Association Orchestra and Chorus, we celebrate the joy of music, the power of community, and the rich heritage of the Western Slope. Now in our 54th year, the VSA is proud to be an all-volunteer organization, uniting musicians of all ages from Grand Junction to Telluride, and beyond, to share our passion for music with audiences of all ages.

This season's theme, Heritage, honors the legacy of our organization and the diverse stories of our community. From our annual free Pops in the Park concert featuring marches, movie themes, and Broadway hits like *Wicked*, *Oklahoma*, and *Hamilton*, to our family-friendly Bach to Rock classics concert, there's something for everyone.

Enjoy holiday traditions with Christmas by Candlelight, revel in the spirit of the American frontier with Canyons to Country featuring guest artist Marie Rhines (www.marierhines.com), and be moved by Heritage to Harmony, presented by the VSA Chorus under new conductor Nathan Howe. We'll close the season with Past to Present, a showcase of favorite pieces from orchestra and audience alike.



TROY RAPER
VSA ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR



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A MUSICAL JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

The Valley Symphony Association continued the tradition of Pops in the Park performances in September 2025. In this year, focused on heritage, we returned on Saturday to the Town of Cedaredge where the VSA began. The musicians appreciated a warm reception, with a community barbecue and a well-attended performance featuring Sousa to Soundtracks. Eating a picnic in the park while listening to The Stars and Stripes Forever is a quintessential small-town American experience. The chorus joined the orchestra for the Soundtracks portion, featuring selections from Wicked and Oklahoma!



On Sunday, we brought the show to Riverbottom Park in Montrose. The weather was perfect, and it's always a joy to play for our community on the banks of the Uncompahgre River. Thank you to DMEA/Elevate for their support of our Pops in the Park performances, and to Budget Blinds for sponsoring our Season 54 T-shirts. We look and sound great because of your support!





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FROM BACH...

Johann Sebastian Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor, BWV 1067 exemplifies the Baroque art of blending elegant dance forms with virtuosic display, particularly for the flute. Though the full suite contains eight movements, the selected Rondeau, Bourrée I & II, Menuet, and Badinerie reveal the expressive range and charm that make this work a perennial favorite. The Rondeau (Movement II) introduces the flute in a graceful, agile solo, framed by the French rondeau form where a recurring refrain alternates with contrasting episodes; its dance-like poise is enriched by Bach's inventive counterpoint. The paired Bourrées (Movement IV) highlight lively contrasts: the first is buoyant and extroverted, while the second, in a minor mode, darkens the color with ornamented lines that suggest introspection before returning to the brightness of the opening. The Menuet (Movement VI) offers stately elegance, its lyrical flute phrases floating serenely above transparent textures, reminding us of the dance's courtly roots. Finally, the Badinerie (Movement VII) bursts forth with dazzling brilliance, its quicksilver runs and sparkling rhythm transforming what might have been a closing dance into one of the most beloved encores in the repertoire. Together, these movements balance refinement with exuberance, showcasing Bach's ability to turn familiar dances into timeless works of artistry and joy.



Richard Meyer's Ghosts of Brandenburg pays witty and affectionate tribute to Johann Sebastian Bach's beloved Brandenburg Concertos. Written for string orchestra, the work imagines the "spirits" of Bach's music reappearing in a contemporary setting, weaving fragments and stylistic echoes of the original concertos into fresh textures. Listeners will recognize Baroque-style sequences, rhythmic drive, and contrapuntal gestures, yet Meyer frames them with modern harmonies and playful twists that give the piece a spirited, almost cinematic character.

The title suggests both reverence and playfulness: Bach's presence is never far away, but Meyer treats it with a light hand, allowing today's performers to enter into dialogue with a master of the past. The result is a work that entertains and educates, celebrating the enduring vitality of Baroque music while inviting audiences to hear Bach's influence through a 21st-century lens.

TO ROCK...

La Suerte de los Tontos (Fortune of Fools) by Johnny Richards, written in 1958 for Stan Kenton's orchestra, is a bold, Latin-infused jazz composition. Premiered in the late 1950s, it epitomized the fusion of Afro-Cuban rhythms with progressive jazz, showcasing Richards' adventurous orchestrations. Its driving percussion and brass fanfares captured the cultural blending of postwar America, sounding fresh, worldly, and modern to audiences of the time.

First performed in Rio de Janeiro in 1962, The Girl from Ipanema quickly became the most famous example of bossa nova, especially through the version popularized by Astrud Gilberto and Stan Getz. Its understated rhythms and breezy sophistication contrasted with the energy of jazz and rock, offering an international audience a new sound of elegance and cool. By the mid-1960s, the song had become a global pop symbol, earning a Grammy for Record of the Year in 1965. The Beatles reshaped the landscape of popular music with innovative harmonies, studio experiments, and genre-crossing styles. Medleys of their hits often include classics like Yesterday, Hey Jude, and Let It Be, songs that defined the cultural voice of the 1960s. Presented in orchestral or choral settings, these medleys highlight the band's sophisticated melodies and enduring influence across musical traditions.

Released in 1969 as part of Tommy, the first full-scale rock opera, Pinball Wizard showcased The Who's high-energy blend of storytelling and rock drive. Pete Townshend's songwriting elevated rock into new theatrical territory, treating it as narrative art. Arriving in the midst of the countercultural revolution, the song cemented rock's ambition to rival classical forms in scope and impact.

Quadrophenia was The Who's 1973 double-album rock opera that told the story of a young mod navigating life in 1960s England. Its score combined hard rock power with synthesizers, orchestral textures, and sound effects, reflecting the layered complexity of youth culture. As



concept albums rose in prominence, Quadrophenia captured both the personal angst and collective rebellion of its era.

Released in 1988, Journey's Greatest Hits brought together the band's most successful songs from the late 1970s and 1980s. It remains one of the best-selling compilation albums of all time, embodying the peak of melodic rock's mass appeal. We hope our rendition can bring back, or create, great memories for you this evening.

Lin-Manuel Miranda's Hamilton premiered off-Broadway in 2015 before quickly moving to Broadway, where it transformed musical theatre. Blending hip-hop, R&B, and traditional show styles, it recast America's founding story through a modern, inclusive lens. Winning the Pulitzer Prize and 11 Tony Awards, it stands as a landmark of 21st-century stage innovation.

Composed for the 1978 film, Children of Sanchez combined symphonic sweep with Chuck Mangione's signature flugelhorn. The work won a Grammy for Best Pop Instrumental Performance, reflecting its powerful blend of jazz, pop, and cinematic scoring. Its soaring themes epitomized late-1970s fusion, captivating audiences with both melodic beauty and emotional resonance. Chuck Mangione died this July at the Age of 81. His music has always been motivational to me and I wanted to end this concert in honor of his contributions to our artform.

WHO ARE OUR VSA MUSICIANS & CHORUS MEMBERS

They live and work right here among us, representing more than a dozen Western Slope communities. Our musicians are teachers, parents, neighbors, and students. They have jobs, children, homes, and full lives beyond the stage. They teach at local colleges and at our high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. They



PHIL THE CELLO



Artistic Director and Orchestra Conductor **Troy Raper** has launched a fun new fundraising project, “**Phil the Cello.**”

Once a beloved instrument from Troy’s high school teaching days, “Phil” now serves as a unique donation box. The name is a playful nod to both *philharmonic* and the idea of *filling Phil* with support for

WHO ARE OUR VSA MUSICIANS & CHORUS MEMBERS

work in business, the arts, health care, government, agriculture, law enforcement, and as entrepreneurs. Some are military veterans. Some are retired. Some are teenagers. Some are snowbirds.

And together, they are the musicians you know; dedicated, passionate, and proud to share their love of music with our community.



PHIL THE CELLO

the Symphony. Concertgoers are invited to contribute and guess the total amount collected this season. The final total will be revealed at the **April 19th concert**, Past to Present, and the closest guess will win a **family season pass** for next year!

Join us in *filling Phil the Cello* and helping us **connect communities through live music**.

THE TRADITION AND LOCAL LEGACY

OF COMMUNITY MUSIC

Since its founding in 1970, the Valley Symphony Association (VSA) has brought orchestral and choral music to audiences across Colorado's Western Slope. What began as informal "music nights" in the home of Wilma and Charles Lowell soon grew into public performances. By 1972, the ensemble presented its first formal concert as the Delta County Community Orchestra, and in 1978, the nonprofit VSA was established. In 2002, the addition of the Valley Symphony Chorus expanded the ensemble's offerings and strengthened its community reach.

Today, more than 125 volunteer musicians from over a dozen towns across six counties unite under one mission, to connect communities through live music.

WHY THIS TRADITION MATTERS

Community orchestras in the U.S. carry a long and proud heritage of citizen-based music making. Amateur ensembles date back to the early 1800s, when neighbors came together purely for the love of performing. Some of the earliest examples include the Boston Phil-Harmonic Society (founded 1809) and the Handel & Haydn Society (1815), still active today.

By the late 19th century, there were an estimated 10,000 community bands across America, many founded by immigrants who brought European traditions of public performance. That spirit continues today, with more than 1,600 orchestras nationwide, many of them small, volunteer ensembles deeply connected to their local communities.



From its grassroots beginnings to a vibrant regional institution, the VSA carries this American legacy forward, bringing together teachers, farmers, students, retirees, and professionals who share a love of music, community, and the joy of performing together.

CHORUS PROGRAM NOTES

Every conductor has a “bucket list” of pieces they hope to perform during their career. When I was selected as VSA Chorus conductor, I began considering my own list with fresh eyes. In this season where we celebrate the heritage of this organization, I went to our library for inspiration. I was heartened to see how much music from VSA’s past is still relevant (and worthy of the bucket list) today.

As musicians, we get to connect with our heritage constantly. After all, our art form doesn’t hang in a gallery gathering dust. We actively re-create the music of the past whenever we sing or play, and it connects us with rich traditions that span centuries.

This season, the VSA Chorus is bringing back classics and connecting them with new favorites, starting with some beautiful Broadway in our Pops in the Park performances. It’s always thrilling to revisit the work of Leonard Bernstein, whose unique approach transformed both Broadway and symphonic music.

When conducting a performance shortly after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Bernstein said, “This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.” In uncertain times, I often return to that vision. Music affirms our humanity and heals division.

Christmas by Candlelight has become a beloved tradition in our community. As we explore our choral heritage, we start in the Renaissance with Praetorius’s Psallite, Unigenito - a carol with Latin and German texts.

For choirs, it simply doesn’t seem like winter without some John Rutter. Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind brings a Shakespeare text to life with a soaring melody over a delicate, icy accompaniment.

In our March chorus concert, High Notes to Harmonies, we draw on the heritage of our nation, our state, and the VSA. 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. We celebrate with a selection of uniquely American choral music.

The musicians of today’s VSA Chorus have received a profound gift from past members and directors. We’re thrilled to share this heritage with our community as we look forward to bringing you meaningful and lovely music for many seasons to come.

NATE HOWE
VSA CHORUS CONDUCTOR

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SEASON CLASSICS & SING-ALONGS

THE GLOW OF CANDLELIGHT

The glow of candlelight, the sparkle of familiar melodies, and the warmth of shared tradition, few experiences capture the season's spirit more fully than music. Tonight's program gathers beloved carols, festive orchestral showpieces, and

timeless classics to create a celebration of joy, reflection, and community.

We open with Festival First Noel, a radiant setting of one of the oldest and best-loved English carols. Its luminous textures and celebratory energy immediately

place us in the heart of the season. Following this, our Christmas Sing-Along invites you, the audience, to

raise your voices with ours. From "Deck the Halls" to "Silent Night," these songs are part of our collective memory, embodying the joy of music shared across generations.



"FEW EXPERIENCES CAPTURE THE SEASON'S SPIRIT MORE FULLY THAN MUSIC."



THE SOUND OF CHRISTMAS

Few songs conjure holiday nostalgia quite like Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, introduced in 1942 and forever associated with Bing Crosby's warm, heartfelt voice. Its wistful simplicity continues to resonate, reminding us of the longing for home and the beauty of snow falling gently outside.



No holiday season would be complete without

Tchaikovsky's

Nutcracker. From the sparkle of the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy to the grandeur of the Waltz of the Flowers, these movements exemplify the ballet's magical blend of grace and imagination.

They invite us into a dream

world of sweets, snow, and enchantment that has become synonymous with Christmas. From ballet to storybook, we turn to music from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, reminding us that the holidays are not about packages or bows, but about the love and fellowship that bring us together.



The haunting beauty of the Wexford Carol, one of Ireland's oldest Christmas carols, offers timeless reflection, while Greensleeves, with soloists, recalls the richness of Renaissance song adapted to the Christmas season as "What Child Is This." Together, these works anchor us in the sacred traditions of the holiday. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's A Christmas Overture, first published in 1925, brings a Romantic brilliance to familiar carols. Interweaving melodies like Hark! The Herald Angels Sing and God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen, Coleridge-Taylor transforms them with lush orchestration and harmonic richness, turning simple tunes into a grand celebration. His overture reminds us how holiday music, when filtered through a composer's imagination, can sound both familiar and fresh. Handel's majestic Hallelujah Chorus from Messiah remains one of the most iconic works of the season. Written in 1741 and premiered in Dublin, it has become a universal expression of triumph and joy, its ringing "Hallelujahs" lifting hearts year after year.

We close with Leroy Anderson's Sleigh Ride, perhaps the most playful and spirited holiday work in the orchestral repertoire. Its jingling bells, whinnying trumpet horse, and infectious rhythm capture the pure fun of the season, sending us out into the winter night with cheer.

From ancient carols to Broadway classics, from the sacred to the whimsical, tonight's Christmas by Candlelight embraces the full range of holiday experience. May the music bring light to the darkness, warmth to the chill, and joy to all who share in this celebration.

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NATE HOWE



MAYOR GREG HART

CELEBRATING THE SOUNDS OF THE WEST

Few landscapes have inspired composers as deeply as the American West, with its wide skies, frontier spirit, and rich folklore. Tonight's program explores this heritage through music that captures the vitality, humor, and lyricism of Western life.



John Williams' *Cowboy Overture* sets the stage with galloping rhythms and bold fanfares, evoking the adventure and excitement of the frontier. Carl Strommen's *Prairie Song* offers a gentler reflection, painting the beauty and solitude of the plains through folk-like melodies and warm orchestration. From the Broadway stage, Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* reminds us how the West also shaped American musical theater, blending romance, optimism, and pioneering spirit in songs that became instant classics.

Ferde Grofé's *On the Trail* from the *Grand Canyon Suite* provides a playful musical snapshot of a canyon donkey ride, complete with clip-clopping rhythms and sweeping vistas. Aaron Copland, often called the "Dean of American Music," deepened the sound of the West with his ballet scores. Excerpts from *Billy the Kid* (*Prairie Night* and *Celebration*) juxtapose moments of gentle lyricism with explosive energy, while the famous *Hoe Down* from *Rodeo* bursts forth with the syncopated drive of a barn dance, immortalizing folk tunes within an orchestral frame.

Bridging tradition with the present, Soon Hee Newbold's *Elementa* expands the evening's focus beyond the historical West to the elemental forces of nature itself. Its cinematic energy and vivid depictions of earth, water, air, and fire connect us to the enduring landscapes that continue to inspire composers today.

Together, these works celebrate not only the mythology of the cowboy and the frontier but also the broader spirit of resilience, imagination, and joy that defines American music.

Capping off this wonderful evening of music is the artistry of our guest violinist, Marie Rhines. Performing her own concerto with the orchestra, as well as sharing the stage with our musicians, she brings a unique voice that captures the spirit of the American West. Her presence ensures a finale both memorable and deeply connected to the landscapes and traditions we all know and love.

GUEST ARTIST: MARIE RHINES – VIOLINIST / COMPOSER



MARIE RHINES

Marie Rhines is a classically trained violinist and composer whose musical voice blends European, Americana, and Western traditions. She holds a Master of Music degree from both Yale University and the New England Conservatory and a Bachelor of Arts in History & Political Science from Northeastern and Boston University.

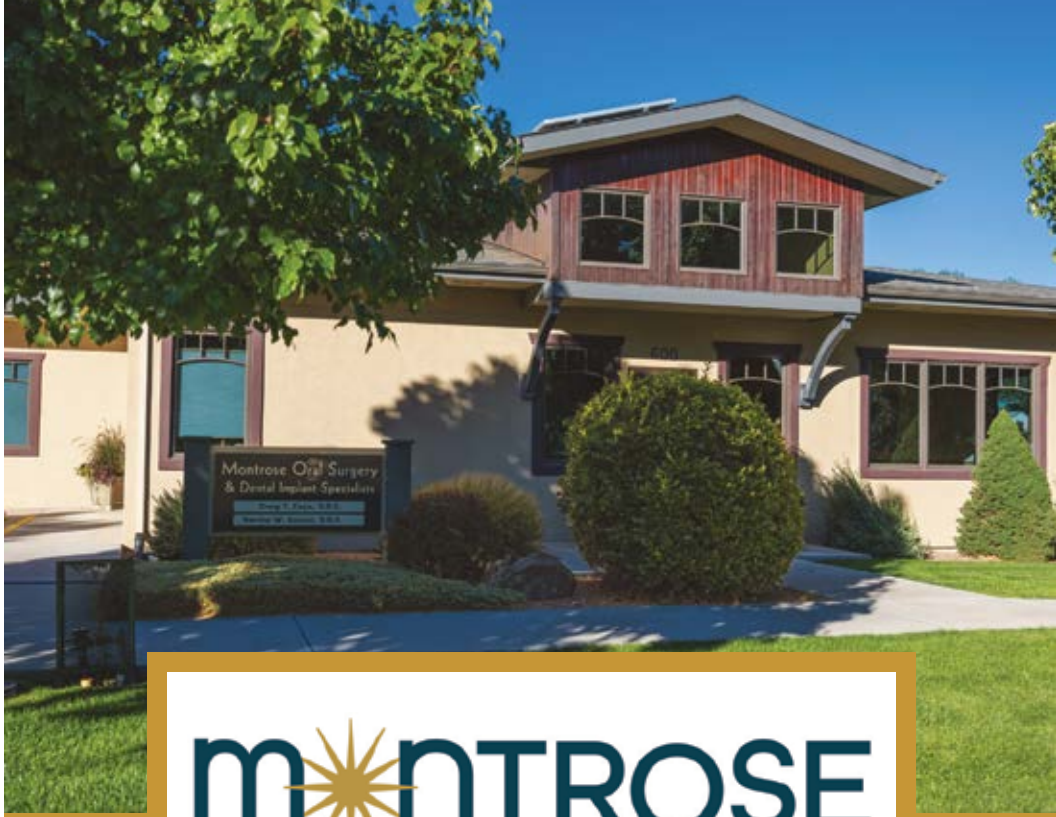
Raised in New England (Lexington, Boston, Vermont, Cape Cod), Rhines' fiddling repertoire encompasses Scottish reels and pipe tunes, Shetland and Irish jigs and

reels, Bluegrass, and the old-time styles of New England and Appalachia. She is the recipient of numerous ASCAP composition awards (22 in all) and a Rockefeller Grant from the American Music Center in New York.

Rhines currently makes her home in Sedona, Arizona, where she has deepened her study of cowboy/cowgirl and Western music, incorporating its history and culture into her work. As a featured soloist, she performs her own violin concertos with symphony orchestras, drawing on her fiddling roots to shape original symphonic compositions. In addition to concert performance, she leads the lecture-music program "Incredible Women of the West", regularly presented in colleges and museums.

More information on Marie can be found at marierhines.com.

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OUR STORIES IN SONG

In a year of both celebration and solemnity, we are excited to share a sampler of choral music that connects with the history of the VSA, the state of Colorado, and our nation as a whole.

In the heritage of the American choral tradition, we have borrowed from so many sources: classical traditions, communal worship from high masses, to shape-note singing, the African American spiritual tradition, and unique ingredients from indigenous music around the world.



These are a few of the composers and arrangers featured this evening:

Randall Thompson was a monolith of American choral and orchestral music in the 20th century, and Leonard Bernstein was one of his students! Choose Something Like A Star comes from Thompson's choral suite Frostiana, written for the bicentennial of the township of Amherst, Massachusetts. The poet Robert Frost lived in Amherst for a time, and his culminating lines in this piece are profoundly relevant today: "So when at times the mob is swayed, To carry praise or blame too far, We may choose something like a star To stay our minds on and be staid."

Cecil Effinger was a Colorado composer, a former professor at the University of Colorado. His pastorales take texts from Colorado's first poet laureate, Thomas Hornsby Ferril. These works show a deep connection to Colorado's environment and people. "No Mark," is an elegy for a fallen military hero, likely a war pilot who was shot down over the ocean and never recovered. Major events often leave a mark in the space where they occur, but there is nothing to mark the place where this plane fell. Ferril closes with a wistful goodbye: "O swing away, white gull, white gull; Evening star, be beautiful."

Stephen Paulus was a modern Minnesota composer whose body of work spans everything from beginning youth choruses to the New York Philharmonic. His Pilgrim's Hymn has become a fixture of choral repertoire.

HIGH NOTES TO HARMONIES

CONCERT NOTES

Before Moses Hogan revived the culture of the choral spiritual in the late 20th century, William Dawson set the stage as a preeminent arranger of spirituals. His arrangements in the early part of the century set the standard. Dawson was a professor at the Tuskegee Institute for 25 years, and was a musicologist as well as a composer. He saw African American folk music as a topic for serious academic study, and his work helped to promote the singing of spirituals as a meaningful, uniquely American art form.



Dr. Andrea Ramsey is a living composer who has taught at the University of Colorado. Her work draws on her roots. A product of public education and the first in her family to attend college, Andrea grew up in rural Arkansas where she experienced firsthand the power of music to provide opportunities, a sense of community, and better understanding of our humanity.

The VSA Chorus is excited to bring the work of these composers and arrangers to life, and to connect our history with our future through this performance. Whether you have been a loyal member of our audience for years, or this is your first time joining us for a concert, you are now a part of our heritage. Thank you.



MUSIC AND GOOD HEALTH GO HAND IN HAND

Montrose Regional Health is Montrose Regional Health is an award-winning hospital and expanded health care system that has been serving a seven-county area in southwestern Colorado for the last 75 years. With a long history of providing advanced, comprehensive, and personalized health care, MRH has been a major part of the fabric of Montrose and the surrounding area for generations and is pleased to partner with the Valley Symphony Association.

Music is remarkably diverse and has a variety of health and wellness benefits. Whether you are listening to it or performing it, are in good health or have health issues, music can help reduce stress and anxiety, improve mood and memory and even aid in pain management. It can also boost motivation, enhance physical performance, and promote social interaction.

For those who perform, there are many benefits. Choral singing is a significant part of American life, with more than 54 million Americans singing today. The more exposure people have to choral singing, the more benefits they report. Older singers report a better quality of life, better connection to others and better overall health. They are also strong contributors to their communities.

Engaging in playing an instrument can provide a physical and mental workout, stimulating various brain regions and promoting coordination. Music performance offers diverse and profound benefit, making it a valuable tool for enhancing health and quality of life.

For those with health issues, music therapy is increasingly used to support individuals with a variety of conditions including neurological disorders and chronic pain. Music can reduce stress and anxiety, enhance mood, improve memory, lower heart rate and blood pressure, help with motivation and focus and enhance physical performance. Both patients and their care providers can show measurable improvement in their well-being from music exposure.

Enjoy the beautiful music provided for you today by the Valley Symphony Association and embrace the health benefits that come with it.



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OUR FAVORITES THEN AND NOW

As we close out our “Heritage” season, we want to celebrate the music that has shaped the Valley Symphony Association by creating a concert chosen by you, our musicians, chorus, and audience. For more than five decades, this community has built a tradition of music-making together, and what better way to honor that heritage than by gathering the “greatest hits” of years gone by and reliving the moments that have meant so much to us all.



Music has a way of meeting us where we are, whether it inspires, comforts, or simply delights. As an orchestra musician myself, I know the thrill of finally playing a piece I've longed for, and I want to extend that same joy to everyone connected with the VSA. This concert is an invitation to live within the music, to experience not only technical brilliance, but the deep sense of belonging that comes when we share music that matters personally.

We invite you to reach into your memories and nominate the works that have touched you most, whether as a performer, a listener, or a lifelong music lover. Submissions may be made online, through QR codes in the program, or even by writing your choice and dropping it into “Phil the Cello.” From these requests, we will shape a program that reflects the collective heart of our community.

Thank you for being part of the Valley Symphony Association family. Your voices, your memories, and your choices will help carry us into the next 54 years of music-making together.



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The Valley Youth Orchestra's vision is to ignite a lifelong passion for music starting at a young age by providing a youth orchestra experience in a nurturing environment with a focus on peer mentoring and community engagement to rural communities in western Colorado.

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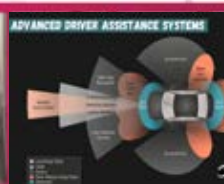
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IN THE SPIRIT OF HERITAGE

MUSIC YOU LOVE. MUSICIAN'S YOU KNOW.

As we celebrate Season 54, themed **"Heritage,"** the **Valley Symphony Association (VSA)** reflects on more than five decades of sharing the transformative power of live orchestral and choral music across the Western Slope.

The VSA stands out as a rare, regional, **all-volunteer performing arts organization**, and is thought to be the only orchestra in Colorado not based in a college town. This independence is a point of pride, symbolizing both resilience and community spirit.

From its earliest years, the VSA has grown steadily in membership, musical excellence, audience size, and program variety. What began as a handful of local musicians has become a thriving ensemble of more than **120 volunteers** representing towns throughout the Grand, Uncompahgre, Gunnison, and North Fork Valleys. Members range in age from teenagers to 90-somethings, bringing together generations through their shared love of music.

The **VSA Chorus**, formed in 2002 when regional singing groups joined under the VSA umbrella, expanded the organization's reach and artistic depth. Together, the orchestra and chorus continue to create meaningful connections among musicians and audiences alike.

Supporting a **community symphony** like the VSA is vital to preserving the Western Slope's artistic **heritage**. It ensures that live symphonic and choral music, performed by neighbors, teachers, and friends, remains accessible to all. Each gift of time, talent, or financial support helps sustain a rare and beautiful tradition that enriches our region's cultural landscape, inspires young musicians, and celebrates the collective spirit of the communities we serve.

This season's theme, **"Heritage,"** reminds us that the VSA's story is one of continuity and community, a celebration of those who have built, sustained, and cherished this musical legacy. Each performance honors that past while ensuring the music, and the spirit behind it, resonate for generations to come.

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HOW TO GET INVOLVED!

VOLUNTEER WITH THE VSA!

Be part of the music that moves our community! The **Valley Symphony Association** relies on passionate volunteers to make every concert a success. Our **Lobby Volunteers** are the welcoming face of the Symphony, greeting guests, distributing programs, assisting with ticket scanning, and guiding patrons to their seats.

In addition, we invite individuals with a love for the arts and community service to consider joining our **Board of Directors**. Board members volunteer their time and leadership to help guide the organization's mission, ensure long-term sustainability, and strengthen connections throughout the Western Slope.

Whether you prefer greeting concertgoers or contributing behind the scenes through leadership and planning, your time and talents make a meaningful difference. Volunteering is a wonderful way to support live music, meet others who share your passion, and give back to a treasured regional tradition.

JOIN THE ORCHESTRA OR CHORUS

If you love music and miss the joy of performing, the **Valley Symphony Association** welcomes you! Our **orchestra and chorus** are made up of talented volunteer musicians and singers from across the Western Slope, from students and educators to professionals and retirees. We rehearse on regular schedule and perform throughout the concert season, bringing together instrumentalists and vocalists of all ages and backgrounds.

Membership offers an opportunity to challenge yourself musically, connect with others who share your passion, and take part in the region's proud symphonic and choral heritage. Whether you play an instrument, sing, or simply want to return to the stage, we'd love to hear from you.

To learn more about joining the Board of Directors, the orchestra or chorus, or to volunteer, reach out to Glen Justis, Troy Raper, Nathan Howe, Bonnie Eggen or Jennifer Colton, or visit www.valleysymphony.net/contact-us



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