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Bridging Cultures with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra



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Bridging Cultures with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra

The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra has been enriching the lives of the people of Sioux Falls and the wider part of the state since it incorporated in 1965. Its community engagement work in particular has been recognized among symphony orchestras across the United States. Comprising 10% of the population of South Dakota, Native American communities have been central to the orchestra's efforts to connect with the state's broad public. This case surveys the inspiration and phases of the Lakota Music Project, initiated by Delta David Gier, Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. The Lakota Music Project is then set in the context of other programs under the umbrella of "Bridging Cultures." A grant to support training in equity, diversity, and inclusion prompts new questions about the organization's past and future.



This case study was prepared by Michael Alan Anderson, Associate Professor of Musicology at the Eastman School of Music. The **Eastman Case Studies** are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements or sources of primary data nor are they to serve as illustrations of effective or ineffective leadership or decision making. This case study is a collaboration of the League of American Orchestras and the Eastman School of Music.



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Enriching Lives in South Dakota

The city of Sioux Falls sits at the intersection of Interstates 90 and 29 in the southeast corner of South Dakota. It is the state's largest city by far, though its population sits just under 200,000. One of the city's treasures is the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO), which services not just Sioux Falls but also the wider region and parts of the state. According to its mission statement, the SDSO endeavors "to celebrate the tradition of live orchestral music and enrich the lives of people throughout our region." Formed in 1922 through Augustana University and incorporated as its own entity in 1965, the orchestra pursues this aim with 35 weeks of concert, education, and outreach programming at its home (the Washington Pavilion), in the community, and around the state.

In the spirit of enriching the lives of the people it serves, the SDSO's core values—Community Engagement, Creating Partnerships, Lifelong Impact, Educational Opportunities, and Live Symphonic Music—noticeably lean toward its role in the community for which it has become recognized among symphony orchestras across the United States.

The organization takes great pride in its education and community outreach efforts and employs a full-time community engagement manager among its small administrative staff of eight. Programs in education at the SDSO reach some 15,000 students annually. Whether through Young People's Concerts, in-school performances, master classes, composition academies, or the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra, these programs serve students across the state of South Dakota. Community engagement programs from "Symphony Storytime" in local libraries to "Music as Medicine" in partnership with Avera and Sanford Health systems in Sioux Falls likewise touch audiences in the region.

Nearly 10% of the population of South Dakota is Native American. These communities have not been forgotten

in the SDSO's education platform. One of the most successful engagement initiatives at the SDSO has been the Lakota Music Project. Intended to engage with the Lakota and Dakota tribes, this program began on shaky ground and took several years to take root. This case surveys the progress of the Lakota Music Project and joins it with larger institutional conversations at the SDSO on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Tribes and Trust

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a core string quartet of the SDSO took education programs to children of Native American tribes, many in the western part of South Dakota. The group would perform annually on one of the nine reservations for two days, presenting a program they had already

developed for children around the state. The players had always felt a little uncomfortable about it. It felt forced; no one had asked for it. While there was no resistance to the SDSO's offering, there was also little cultural exchange or understanding.

As these brief residencies on the reservations continued, SDSO Music Director Delta David Gier was

at work on a more nuanced idea to partner with the Native American communities in the state. It began with a lunch in 2005, which the SDSO hosted for leaders of Lakota as well as Dakota leaders within Sioux Falls. Gier arrived with ideas for bringing music to these local communities. The music director was met with complete mistrust, his ideas suspect. Gier didn't take the suspicion personally. Native Americans in South Dakota—let alone across the United States—had serious misgivings with non-Native Americans in general. There was a long history of bloodshed and broken treaties for generations. Wounded Knee, an area located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, was the site of two conflicts with

The SDSO's efforts in the community have become recognized among symphony orchestras across the United States.

federal forces, one a massacre in 1890 and the other a standoff in 1973. The former resulted in 150 Native American deaths, including the famous Sioux chief Sitting Bull; the latter, two Native American deaths and a wounded federal marshal.

The SDSO had a long path to building trust with these tribes before a positive collaboration could be conceived. At the lunch, the Lakota leaders asked Gier who would be making money in the partnership. They had memories of the movie *Dances with Wolves*, which was filmed in parts of South Dakota in 1989. Lakota is spoken in the movie all the way through, and members of the tribe were hired to coach it. While they were paid fairly, the Native Americans were hoping for a partnership rather than a one-time transactional encounter. The film rose to great acclaim, earning an Oscar for Best Picture in 1991. The tribes were all but forgotten in the movie's success.

The lunch was not altogether a failure, though. Barry LeBeau, an Indian affairs and arts lobbyist, approached Delta David Gier: "You're crazy, but I would like to try to help you." In the weeks ahead, LeBeau drove Gier around the state of South Dakota, introducing him to tribal elders and cultural leaders. As a tribal relations consultant, LeBeau had connections to communities across the state that were crucial; a partnership could not start from nothing.

Coming Together

While traversing South Dakota, LeBeau and Gier met Ronnie Theisz, professor emeritus of American Indian Studies at Black Hills State University and author of several books on Lakota music and culture. He would serve as a mentor in developing a project for the SDSO. In 2006, Gier and nine core musicians of the SDSO traveled to Eagle Butte, South Dakota on the Cheyenne River reservation. They had further scheduled a collaboration and tutorial with a Lakota drumming group, the Porcupine Singers, from the

Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The drumming group did not show and did not communicate their absence. (A family member of one of the drummers had been killed in a car accident at Pine Ridge, so they needed to stay back.) With the extra hours the group had in Eagle Butte, Ronnie Theisz took over the tutorial session and taught the SDSO about the history of Lakota music, including the elements and structure of their songs. "He had us all singing and dancing," Gier recalled. The musicians were nonetheless skeptical about whether a partnership would work with Lakota tribes. Some SDSO players felt they were trying to be something other than who they were. These were the beginnings of many bumps in the road. The month of trying to build relationships seemed futile. And it was certainly costing the organization, which had to transport and lodge its musicians hours from home on the other side of the state.

Despite the initial mixup, Delta David Gier, Barry LeBeau, and the SDSO traveled to the Pine Ridge reservation the following year and finally met up with that Lakota drumming group at a local boys and girls club. A blizzard was in the forecast outside, but the evening was filled with music inside. For four hours, the SDSO's principal string quartet, woodwind quintet, and the Porcupine Singers performed independently for one another, and their musical dialogue led to an organic exchange of ideas. The groups began to discuss why they played music and what it meant to them. For example, the keeper of the drum—Melvin Young Bear—shared with those assembled that one of the numbers the drumming group played was a piece he composed for his granddaughter. Regarding the music of the drumming group in general, Young Bear continued: "We're not a pow-wow group . . . we sing the old songs. Our hope is that we can pass these songs

The groups began to discuss why they played music and what it meant to them. . . they felt common ground materializing.

on to the next generation.” Gier responded, “That’s exactly what we do!” A relationship was developing between all of the musicians; they felt common ground materializing. The orchestra members knew they too were stewards of a musical tradition. They also want these traditions to grow and to nurture the culture of the present. The connection was palpable.

As the evening wound down, Gier posed the question: “If we were to do a tour together, what would we play?” The orchestral musicians and the drumming group had no repertoire to play together, only their individual contributions. Ronnie Theisz jumped in and suggested that the groups consider works on select themes that are common to humanity. They jointly developed four themes: Love, War, Mourning, and Celebration. These interactions and sense of desire for collaboration laid the groundwork for the Lakota Music Project.

In 2009, the Porcupine Singers and SDSO musicians reconvened for the first tour of the Lakota Music Project. During the initial half of the program, the musicians played back and forth from their own traditions on the four themes, punctuated by discussions about the role music plays in their respective cultures. The second part of the two-hour program featured the groups combined. Fortunately, the Lakota Music Project received funding from the American Composers Forum for a commission highlighting SDSO musicians and the Lakota drumming group. Through an award from the First Nations Composers Initiative, Mohican composer Brent Michael Davids wrote a new piece for chamber orchestra and drumming group called *Black Hills Olowan*. Part of the work was based on a traditional Lakota song. The piece had the air of a film score, combining an orchestral texture with phrases of Lakota singing and climaxing with the drumming group singing and playing full bore at the end. That same year, SDSO oboist Jeffrey Paul likewise received a commission to compose for the Lakota Music Project. His *Desert Wind* for orchestra, electric guitar, and drumming group integrated the song that Melvin Young Bear composed

for his granddaughter. The program for the inaugural Lakota Music Project was repeated at least 30 times over the next several years. (For the full programming of the LMP, see **Appendix 1**.) Two-day residencies with small groups of SDSO musicians took place on six of the nine major Native American reservations in South Dakota. They also played in the state capitol during a legislative session.

Reflections on Phase I

The Lakota Music Project (LMP) residencies were expensive and growing. In the first year of the project (2009), the SDSO received a \$95,000 earmark from South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson, to whom the orchestra was connected by two of its board members. In that year, the project toured three Native American reservations (Pine Ridge, Santee Sioux, and Rosebud) and two South Dakota communities (Sioux Falls and Rapid City). The chamber groups that had been dispatched to reservations were beginning to witness the cultural bonds they were helping forge. Native American schoolchildren also benefited from the partnership, as musicians shared pre-existing education programs during the residencies. In performances of the LMP, Ronnie Theisz continued to play a guiding role. The SDSO also incorporated other Native American musicians, such as the Creekside Singers and Dakota cedar flutist Bryan Akipa. Theisz sat at the drum for both the Porcupine and Creekside Singers, but also delivered remarks during the concert and gave tutorials on site during residencies. Composer commissions for these groups further continued apace.

In facing the history of racial tension in South Dakota through musical dialogue, the LMP serves as a means of connection between Native and non-native Americans. Reflecting on the origins of the LMP, Delta David Gier simplified the rationale and motivation for the program he helped create. “Number one: do the right thing. Number two: do the right thing for the right reason. Number three: do the right thing the right way.” He elaborated on these principles. It is one thing to

share great music with a community; it is quite another to understand what the needs of a community are and

It is one thing to share great music with a community; it is quite another to understand what the needs of a community are and to have a dialogue with people.

to have a dialogue with people. That is what he means by “the right thing.” The right *reason* to do this would be to connect genuinely with members of the broad community; the potential for grant funding and/or publicity should never drive a strategy like this, Gier warned. The

“right way”, he opined, was to interact collaboratively. “What are your needs and what do we have to offer as an orchestra? Let’s build something together.”

Seeing the results of the LMP, the music director believes that orchestras around the world need to “wake up to the fact that they need to be doing this kind of work.” Executive Director Jennifer Teisinger emphasized how crucial it was to build a relationship of understanding before any music is played, given the disparate backgrounds of the musicians. “Native American artists come at music very differently than classically trained musicians. Doing that work starts with building trust. It’s not something you learn while earning a music degree. You cannot even start to play together until everyone feels safe.”

Even when a positive environment was formed, not

“The participants have to have a heart for this.” – Delta David Gier

all members of the SDSO participated in the LMP. Gier urged that community initiatives like these “need to come from the artistic side. The participants have to have a heart for

this. The staff usually gets it, but a lot of musicians don’t. They want to play more Mahler. Likewise, this

is not something you can just assign to an assistant conductor. Everyone has to be ‘all in.’”

LMP Phase II

Following the first five years of the Lakota Music Project, the SDSO was able to articulate more formally three guiding principles for the programs it creates under that heading:

- The LMP provides a positive, safe, open space for dialogue.
- The LMP explores what our different cultures share, rather than what makes them different.
- The LMP embraces the value of peaceful collaboration.

With these principles in mind, the Lakota Music Project embarked on a second phase of activity from 2012 to 2016. Three goals were set for Phase II. First, the SDSO wanted to continue to foster relationships with existing partners from Phase I. Next, the orchestra endeavored to extend the reach of the program to additional South Dakota reservations and communities. Finally, it sought like-minded organizational partners to increase the scope and depth of the LMP. In pursuit of the first initiative, the SDSO continued a collaboration with the Crazy Horse Memorial, the world’s largest mountain carving located in the western most reaches of South Dakota. The first LMP performances at the Crazy Horse Visitor Center took place in 2010 on “Native American Day,” formerly the “Columbus Day” holiday until it was renamed in South Dakota in 1989.

A “like-minded” partner emerged in Phase II of the LMP—the South Dakota Humanities Council. The council’s mission to engage citizens of South Dakota “celebrates literature, promotes civil conversation, and tells the stories that define our state.” These tactics resonated strongly with the LMP, exemplifying its humanistic spirit. The South Dakota Humanities Council joined with the SDSO on two projects featuring the LMP—the New Harmonies Project and the Festival of Books. The former project brought programming across the entire state with tour performances in

Sturgis (western border of South Dakota) followed by a concert in Sioux Falls on the eastern border.

The LMP's third commissioned work was funded by a Music Alive grant from New Music USA. *Waktégli Olówa* ("Victory Songs") is a song cycle for baritone and orchestra, sung in Lakota and composed by Chickasaw composer Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate. The new work received its premiere on an SDSO subscription concert in January 2013. It is a five-movement piece in which each movement honors one Lakota warrior (Red Cloud, Gall, Crazy Horse, Two Strike, and Sitting Bull). A fourth work, *Pentatonic Fantasy*, was also commissioned in Phase II from SDSO oboist Jeffrey Paul, mentioned earlier. This work for orchestra and cedar flute featured soloist Bryan Akipa, with whom the LMP had already collaborated. In 2013, Akipa premiered *Pentatonic Fantasy* at his hometown of Sisseton on the Lake Traverse Indian Reservation. The new work, along with a chamber orchestra version of *Waktégli Olówa*, was part of a second statewide tour undertaken during Phase II, this time funded by the Mellon Foundation. The imprint of the LMP increased with performances in Eagle Butte, Mobridge, the state capitol Pierre, and Sisseton. The return to Sisseton was part of a capstone to the Phase II goals of the Lakota Music Project.

As the program gained momentum, SDSO administration wanted to see these performances showcased on its mainstage series, rather than siloed in offsite educational initiatives. In 2016, a portion of the LMP was finally featured in the SDSO mainstage series at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls. *Black Hills Olowan* was performed in connection with music historian and critic Joseph Horowitz's "Dvorak and America" program, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The SDSO reprised the program in the friendly environs of Sisseton on the Lake Traverse Reservation in March 2016.

LMP Phase III

The relationship formed between participants in the

Lakota Music Project and community members in Sisseton drove some of the thinking in the third phase of the program, marked from 2017 until 2019. While the first two phases witnessed the musicians of the LMP canvassing a wide geography of South Dakota and establishing relationships with communities at different reservations and venues, the next step involved a more intense focus on deepening relationships with select groups. SDSO administration figured that more concentrated education and cross-cultural programming could strengthen the bonds between musicians and communities. The LMP selected the city of Sisseton as a partner, on account of its commitment, enthusiasm, and leadership displayed in the previous phase. Crazy Horse Memorial was chosen as another collaborator in the western part of the state. While Sisseton continues to be a vital partner of the SDSO, Crazy Horse has turned out to be less so, due to a restructuring of their own priorities and commitments.

Two generous awards in 2017 increased the possibilities for building programming with these partners. The SDSO was granted a prestigious Bush Prize for Community Innovation, which "celebrates organizations with a track record of successful community problem solving." The award has a geographic focus on Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, including the 23 Native nations in those states. The Bush Prize was inspired by the Lakota Music Project and created an opportunity for the SDSO to expand cultural engagement programs. For winners, the prize of nearly \$500,000 for the SDSO amounts to almost a quarter of the organization's annual operating budget. (It is noteworthy that this is typically not an arts prize.) A Music Alive composer-in-residence grant from New Music USA brought total support for new programming closer to \$700,000.

As part of the consolidation desired in Phase III, the LMP took firmer root both in Sioux Falls and outside of it. In partnership with the Multi-Cultural Center of Sioux Falls for example, the LMP designed a program

In Phase III, more concentrated education and cross-cultural programming could strengthen the bonds between SDSO musicians and communities.

focusing on leadership and exploring the impact of elders and mentors in Lakota, Dakota, and white American culture. The Multi-Cultural Center provides an important cultural space for diverse communities to come together. A chamber ensemble contingent of the LMP revived Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate's Lakota song cycle *Waktégli Olówa* for new audiences.

The five-movement work was presented with pieces of standard orchestral repertoire illustrating the qualities of leadership agreed upon as the focus of this program, and included narration and storytelling from Barry LeBeau, Ronnie Theisz, and a tribal elder from Pine Ridge Reservation, Chris Eagle Hawk.

Meantime, the SDSO structured learning opportunities around the state with its burgeoning LMP program. Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate was named a composer-in-residence for the SDSO in 2017. As one of his major accomplishments while in residence, Tate created a Music Composition Academy that teaches American Indian and white student composers. The city of Sisseton and Crazy Horse Memorial hosted LMP's first Music Composition Academies in 2017. (The West River Academy was subsequently moved to Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota.) Academy students spend one week working with a team of three composers, in both individual and group lessons, producing a composition of their own for either string quartet or woodwind quintet. SDSO chamber music players then take up the works and perform them multiple times in Sisseton, Rapid City, Pine Ridge, and Sioux Falls. In 2018, Theodore Wiprud succeeded Tate as composer-in-residence and has continued the academies.

While LMP activities began to streamline in South

Dakota, a chamber music contingent from the project was invited to prepare concerts for a 2019 tour of Washington DC, its biggest stage yet. The group featured nine musicians from the SDSO and two award-winning Native American artists—singer Emanuel Black Bear (Oglala Lakota) from Pine Ridge and cedar flutist Bryan Akipa from Sisseton, both of whom had been associated with the LMP for several years. Ronnie Theisz continued his connection to the LMP as a storyteller on the Washington DC tour. Performances took place at the National Cathedral (as part of the Post-Classical Ensemble's Native American Festival) and at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. The concert events were supplemented by conversations about classical music inspired and performed by Native Americans.

Bridging Cultures

With the Lakota Music Project as the flagship community engagement program of the SDSO, the orchestra was en route to formalizing what Delta David Gier had introduced with his own energy—a more comprehensive program of outreach through music. In 2016, the SDSO established a committee of its board members and musicians together with select leaders from private industry and government. The committee determined that embracing diversity was the most pressing issue facing Sioux Falls and South Dakota and—importantly—was an issue for which the SDSO could make a powerful impact. While there is an impression of South Dakota being an almost exclusively white racial majority, the state has rapidly growing communities of African-Americans, Latinx, Asians, and American Indians. Refugee populations are also expanding, driven by families forcibly relocated from many countries around the world, such as Myanmar (formerly Burma) in Southeast Asia and Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia in East Africa. One elementary school in Sioux Falls has 56 native languages of its students echoing through the hallways each day. There was talk of a program that widened the scope of community

“Bridging Cultures is an umbrella for things that were already happening at the SDSO.” – Delta David Gier

engagement with the LMP model in mind. The rubric of “Bridging Cultures” emerged from the committee’s work in 2018.

“Bridging Cultures is an umbrella for things that were already happening at the SDSO,” Gier asserts.

Outside of the LMP, the

orchestra has done several mainstage programs that have incorporated global musics for more than a decade (**Appendix 2**). Gier continued, “I’ve been careful that the world music we do reflects the communities we have in Sioux Falls.” Several communities in Sioux Falls have captured the attention of the symphony. In 2009, the SDSO worked with Sioux Falls’ Sudanese and Somali refugee populations through concerts with Bernard Woma, a gyile (xylophone) player from Upper West Ghana, and his gyl ensemble. Two years later, lawyer and former South Dakota Senator James Abourezk, the first Arab-American Senator in U.S. history and longtime symphony supporter, suggested inviting Palestinian-American oud player Simon Shaheen for a residency with the SDSO. This effort was meant to welcome estranged Arab communities who were mainly involved in the hospital system in Sioux Falls. The virtuosic Shaheen was a fitting complement to SDSO fare, and the residency culminated in a performance of Shaheen’s *Oud Concerto*. A follow-up program engaging both Arab and Persian communities was conceived as “cultures in conflict with a musical resolution.” Iranian composer Behzad Ranjbaran was in residence for his *Viola Concerto* (performed by Roberto Diaz), as was Syrian composer Malek Jandali for the world premiere of his *Phoenix in Exile*.

In 2013, a residency with Chinese composers Chen Yi and Zhou Long represented the orchestra’s first

engagement with the local Chinese community. The focus carried into January 2014 with a performance of Tan Dun’s *Crouching Tiger Concerto for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* with Hai-ye Ni as soloist. Zhou Long came for a second residency in January 2020 for a performance of his *Poems from Tang: Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*. Multiple activities accompanied each of these programs. The residencies with Chinese artists for instance was coordinated with the Sioux Falls Chinese Association, the Multi-Cultural Center of Sioux Falls, public and private schools, universities, and hospitals. Education & Community Engagement Manager Kristy Bonde has been a valuable point person to support these and other programs.

As happened with the LMP, Bridging Cultures found the orchestra doing community engagement work, which was institutionalized more formally well after it had begun. Reflecting on the communities that the SDSO has reached over the last several years, the orchestra’s administration affirmed that Bridging Cultures relies on community partners for its success. The communities with which the SDSO has collaborated most fruitfully have had genuine interest in working with the orchestra. All community alliances begin with open conversations with community contacts.

The dialogue may include brainstorming about what music from that community may inspire people to attend a performance. Sometimes, a composer may be commissioned with these ideas in mind. Community contacts also become valuable resources for publicizing events that grow from these ideas.

The communities with which the SDSO has collaborated most fruitfully have had genuine interest in working with the orchestra.

Through the development of the LMP and subsequent launch of Bridging Cultures, Delta David Gier revisited his motivation for beginning community engagement and developed a rubric for the orchestra that refined the “Do the right thing” mantra:

1) Do the right thing.

- The right thing begins with an honest assessment of city, state, and region. Which communities are most in need of partnerships? Who are the most viable partners? (This is important as not every community is ready to partner.) What programming will contribute to community-building, will most benefit all the residents of the city/state/region through the facilitation of understanding through the sharing of music?
- The right thing will look different in each community. For example, from a community engagement perspective, there is no need for a Lakota Music Project in New Jersey, interesting and informative as it would be.

2) Do the right thing for the right reason.

- Authenticity is key: Do we actually desire to make a difference? Are we prepared to adapt the way we engage, the way we program, in response to the relationships we develop in the community? There is funding, publicity, development to be accessed through this kind of programming, but these must not be the reason for entering into relationship with others. Our motivation will be quite evident to those with whom we are working.
- We must ensure we are in community partnerships for the long haul. No communities are in need of “one-offs”; rather, what is required is a genuine relationship, entered into with the intention of friendship. The relationship is powerful, of course, but doubly so the demonstration of what friendship looks like through an equal partnership in creating art, making music, together. Are we willing to commit to this? Not only the time and resources,

but the identity of our institutions? When we begin to change the perception of who we are and how we interact with the community, we seize the relevance we have so eagerly sought. People can and will see the value the orchestra, our musicians, staff, and board bring to the good of the community.

3) Do the right thing in the right way.

- We build a program together with the community with which we are partnering. While an orchestra may come to the table with ideas, this kind of work requires us to listen, setting aside our preconceptions about what any particular program will look like. We talk a lot about doing things “out of the box,” but we need perspectives from outside of our symphony orchestra “boxes” in order to adapt and change.

Jennifer Teisinger is aware of the organic growth of community engagement at the SDSO, due in large part to Delta David Gier’s passion for this work. And while many musicians were now on board with the outreach initiatives, the organization as a whole was not in lockstep with the artistic director’s zeal. “We’re doing a good job programatically,” Teisinger said, “but Bridging Cultures hasn’t been fully understood or embraced by the board or the rest of the organization. Few of our board members attend events under the Bridging Cultures header, and staff at the SDSO do not all know how to talk about the vision of the program. . . The institution has some catching up to do.”

Teisinger is confident that if the SDSO can embrace Bridging Cultures with the same level of commitment as Delta David Gier and some of the key musicians who participate, the orchestra will benefit as a whole. For example, SDSO board member and CEO of Avera McKennan Hospital, David Flicek, quickly embraced the Bridging Cultures program, and, in 2019, hosted a specially curated multicultural concert at one of their hospitals

with the goal of creating a belonging for its own diversifying staff. Teisinger has proposed that the SDSO consider a revision to its mission statement

"We're doing a good job programatically, but Bridging Cultures hasn't been fully understood or embraced by the board or the rest of the organization."
– Jennifer Teisinger

to include its community engagement work. She also longs for additional board understanding of these projects. And finally, Teisinger wants everyone in all corners of the SDSO

to have an elevator speech down about "Bridging Cultures." What does the program mean to the SDSO? Why should people connected to SDSO care about these efforts in the community?

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In early 2020, the SDSO formed an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee to address the internal work that demanded attention to these issues. The "EDI" committee consists of board, musicians, and staff, who were charged with steering progress on equity concerns and opportunities within the symphony. The committee's work was aided by news of a provisional grant that the symphony was awarded from the Catalyst Fund, a Mellon Foundation prize managed and distributed by the League of American Orchestras. The \$19,000 grant is given specifically to orchestras "for capacity building by encouraging effective practices to advance their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion." While the SDSO has shown promise in its artistic endeavors with various communities in South Dakota (most notably through the LMP), this grant would push the orchestra to have tough, overdue conversations on equity, diversity, and inclusion, which have lagged behind its programming.

Support from Catalyst Fund will allow the SDSO to hire consultants "to strengthen their knowledge of the issues pertaining to EDI" and "to create strategies that are relevant to their communities." Symphony administrators have two consultants in mind who can provide professional development to board members, musicians, and staff on racial equity, implicit bias, structural racism in the United States, and the history of racism in South Dakota in particular. The first proposed facilitator is Craig Howe, the director of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, a nonprofit research center committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of American Indian communities and issues important to them. He lives on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and is an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Keryl McCord, CEO of Equity Quotient, is an equity and Title IX specialist who can address broader issues of racial inequity through training. The plan is for the board to meet with these counselors in dedicated sessions; musicians and staff will also train separately.

Teisinger is pleased with the direction of the SDSO in these fragile times for symphony orchestras. She is proud that Delta David Gier, a native New Yorker, will be inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame for his tireless work in launching the Lakota Music Project. Teisinger is also eager to announce that the LMP and programs under the Bridging Cultures umbrella, which had thrived outside the concert hall and in community centers around the state, are scheduled on the mainstage concert series in 2020-21 for the first time in SDSO history, reflecting a commitment to these initiatives that are now central to the orchestra's work. She wonders, though, how things will change after the EDI training. What recommendations will come from a serious look at organizational policies and processes? What goals will be set and how will achievements in EDI be measured? "With our eyes more open, how does the SDSO then walk its artistic talk?" Teisinger mused. "There is so much work to be done, but we've had

a taste of it in the Lakota Music Project. We want to create a real sense of belonging in our communities. And not through 'one-and-done' programs."

When the training is complete, the next step for the SDSO figures to be addressing the increasing diversification

in Sioux Falls and plotting artistically how to create a sense of belonging for the city's multicultural profile. The Somali refugee population is the largest group of refugees in Sioux Falls, for instance. As EDI training begins, she and Gier are already thinking ahead about this community in particular.

APPENDIX I

Lakota Music Project Programs

Phase I Program

John Stafford Smith, Robert Moore, tenor

Star-Spangled Banner

Ellis Chips, Chris Big Eagle, Ben Black Elk

Lakota Flag Song

COURTSHIP AND LOVE

Ben Sitting Up

Rabbit Song

Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Romeo and Juliet Overture – Fantasy (excerpt)

Richard Wagner

Siegfried Idyll (excerpt)

THE SPIRITUAL WARRIOR / SOLDIER

Anon.

World War II Veteran's Song

Serge Prokofiev

The Death of Tybalt from Romeo and Juliet (excerpt)

Aram Khachaturian

Sabre Dance from Gayneh

DEATH AND MOURNING

Samuel Barber

Adagio for Strings

Severt Young Bear, Sr.

Mourning Songs

JOY AND AFFIRMATION

George Frederic Handel

Overture from Music for the Royal Fireworks

Aaron Copland

Variations on a Shaker Melody from Appalachian Spring

Severt Young Bear, Sr.

Intertribal Special Song

Jeffrey Paul, Melvin Young Bear

Desert Wind / Harmony's Song

Brent Michael Davids

Black Hills Olowan

Phase II Program

Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate

Waktegli Olowan (Stephen Bryant, baritone)

Jeffrey Paul

Pentatonic Fantasy (Bryan Akipa, Dakota Flute)

Phase III - 2019 Sioux Falls Performance

The Wisdom of Leadership: Then and Today

A program that tells the story of four great warriors: Crazy Horse, Two Strike, Red Cloud & Sitting Bull

John Stafford Smith

Star-Spangled Banner

Jerod Tate

Victory Songs

Richard Strauss

Einmal Anders!

Jean Sibelius

Finlandia

Jerod Tate

Guide Me

Lawrence

Closure

Ted Wiprud arr.

Amazing Grace

APPENDIX 2

Bridging Cultures Programs

Compiled by Delta David Gier

September 2008: SDSO's first multicultural program was in the Mary W. Sommervold Hall at the Washington Pavilion and featured the Lakota drumming group, The Porcupine Singers, performing *Native Drumming* by James DeMars. This inaugural multicultural program also featured the Bernard Woma Ensemble performing his *Concerto for African Gyl*. Composer Derek Bermel was in residence for this program, which also featured his *Dust Dances*, inspired by his study of the Gyl in Ghana. The SDSO provided free tickets to the Sudanese and Somali refugee communities in Sioux Falls.

James DeMars - *Native Drumming*
 Derek Bermel - *Dust Dances*
 Multiple selections for Gyl ensemble
 Bernard Woma - *Concerto for Gyl and Orchestra*

November 2011: The first Arab composer engaged by the SDSO was Simon Shaheen in a performance of his *Oud Concerto* as soloist. In addition to performing with the orchestra, Shaheen spoke at local high schools and universities about Arab music and culture during his visit to Sioux Falls and played a private concert for the Arab community in Sioux Falls.

Bizet: *Carmen Suites Nos. 1 and 2*
 Shaheen: *Dance Mediterranea*
 Shaheen: *Concerto in Three Movements for Oud & Orchestra*

2013: The SDSO began its relationship with the Sioux Falls Chinese Association in 2013, instigated by Chinese composer Zhou Long winning the Pulitzer Prize in 2010. (Delta David Gier chaired the Pulitzer jury that year and subsequently began a relationship with Zhou Long.) The SDSO performed a chamber music program with works by both Long and his wife, Chen Yi, in 2013. During the concert, both composers spoke of growing up during the Cultural Revolution and how that period in China's history influenced their music. Most of the 80 Chinese audience members had had similar experiences of their own. A meal was hosted after the concert, during which there was substantial time for meaningful sharing.

Zhou Long: *Taigu Rhyme*
 Zhou Long: *Bell Drum Towers*
 Chen Yi: *Wind Quintet No. 3 "Suite from China"*
 Mahler: *Songs of a Wayfarer* (chamber version)

January, 2014: Performance of Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger Concerto for Cello and Chamber Orchestra* with Hai-ye Ni (Principal Cello, Philadelphia Orchestra) as soloist. The Sioux Falls Chinese Association was re-engaged around this concert, which featured a reception for Hai-ye sponsored by them.

Elgar: *Serenade for Strings*

Tan Dun: *Crouching Tiger Concerto for Cello and Chamber Orchestra*

Bartok: *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*

December 2015: Sioux Falls Lion Dance Team from the Chinese Association performed on the SDSO's "Holiday Collage" concert.

February, 2017: Premiere of Syrian composer Malek Jandali's *Phoenix in Exile*. Also on this concert was Iranian composer Behzad Ranjbaran's *Viola Concerto*, played by Curtis Institute of Music president Roberto Diaz. Both Jandali and Ranjbaran spoke at the Muslim Community Center during their time in Sioux Falls, as well as for a special event the day of the concert for Arab and Persian students and professors from area universities. After having an extensive exchange with the Imam about the role of music within Islam, Jandali was invited to the community center the Sunday following the concert to teach children about the history of Arab music. Delta David Gier refers to the program as "Cultures in Conflict with a Musical Resolution."

Jandali: *Phoenix in Exile*

Ranjabaran: *Viola Concerto*

Ravel: *Rhapsodie espagnole*

Ravel: *Bolero*

March, 2018: Violinist Dan Zhu performed *Lamura Cuo* by Ye Xiaogang, from the Central Conservatory of Beijing. This program was also performed for the Young People's Concerts in the same month. The Sioux Falls Chinese Association hosted an event for Zhu following the Sunday matinee.

Bernstein: *Serenade after Plato's Symposium*

Xiaogang: *Lamura Cuo*

Kreisler: *Tamborin Chinois*

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 2*

Launch of Bridging Cultures: Starting in 2018, the SDSO intentionally created concerts and community engagement activities to create a sense of belonging through multicultural programming under the name "Bridging Cultures."

January 2018: SDSO presented *Copland & Mexico*, a program created by author and musicologist Joseph Horowitz, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities under the banner *Music Unwound*. The SDSO has since performed two more *Music Unwound* programs, which have included rich educational activities for area schools. Repertoire included Copland's "Hoedown" from *Rodeo* and *El Salón México* and Revueltas' *Sensemaya* and *Redes* (with film). Outreach to Sioux Falls Hispanic communities around this concert included the Hispanic Business Network of Sioux Falls and Our Lady of Guadalupe Ministry. Families from the Latinx population of Sioux Falls redeemed over 600 free tickets for this concert. Educational activities around this program included middle school humanities students creating graphic poster-boards, which were displayed throughout the concert hall over the weekend. Students were also interviewed during the pre-concert talks.

Copland: "Hoedown" from *Rodeo*

Copland: *El Salón México*

Revueltas: "Duelo" and "Son" from *Homage to Federico García Lorca*

Revueltas: *Sensemaya*

Revueltas: *Redes* (complete with film)

February 2019: A partnership with Avera Health provided the impetus for creating a new program for engaging physicians from other countries who have relocated to Sioux Falls. The inaugural concert took place at Avera's Prairie Center campus and was followed by a free concert at Augustana University. The program featured music of Indian-American composer Reena Esmail and Pakistani composer Admal Parwez, Filipino composer Nilo Alcala, German-Guatemalan composer Dieter Lehnoff and Salvadoran composer German Caceres. Reena Esmail and Nilo Alcala were in residence for these performances and took part in multiple events in Sioux Falls, including talks in area high schools and middle schools, as well as events within the Filipino, South Asian, and Muslim communities. This program was curated by Music Alive composer-in-residence Theodore Wiprud.

Dieter Lehnhoff: *Tardes de Feria* – "Danzon"

German Caceres: *Octostylus*

Dieter Lehnhoff: *Llegó Pacheco*

Akmal Parwez: *Nav Rasa, III. Passion, Pain, and Peace*

Reena Esmail: *Teen Murti*

Nilo Alcala: *Dancing Delusions*

Nilo Alcala: *Dayo Dayo Kupita*

February, 2019: Ecuadorian-American cellist Francisco Vila-Haas spent a week in residence with the SDSO which, in addition to performing a concerto with the orchestra and master classes for young cellists, included multiple performances at Smithfield Foods (a meat-packing plant) for the employees, many of whom immigrants and refugees.

Verdi: "Triumphal March" from *Aida* (with SDSO youth orchestra)

Lalo: *Cello Concerto*

Prokofiev: *Symphony No. 5*

March 2019: the first inclusion of the Music Composition Academy students' pieces on a subscription program. SDSO patrons were delighted and highly moved to hear compositions by three Lakota and Dakota teenagers, all of whom were present to introduce their pieces. Music Alive composer-in-residence Theodore Wiprud guided their studies and the creation of their works for string quartet, and supervised the adaptation of these pieces for string orchestra for this program. He also received the premiere of his composition *Wind of Many Voices*, which was inspired by his time in South Dakota, particularly his relations with the Lakota and Dakota people.

Tchaikovsky: *Violin Concerto* (David Kim, soloist)

Wiprud: *Wind of Many Voices*

Fasthorse: *Opus No. 1*

Lawrence: *Closer*

Trujillo: *Adagio*

Sibelius: *Symphony No. 7*

January 2020: Performance of Zhou Long's *Poems from Tang*. During this trip to South Dakota, the composer met with the Sioux Falls Chinese Association and presented seminars on his music and career at several area high schools. The concert opened with a performance by the Sioux Falls Lion Dance team. During the performance of his piece each of the poems was recited in Chinese by Long, prior to each of the four movements (with English supertitles).

Zhou Long: *Poems from Tang*

Ravel: *Daphnis and Chloe*



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