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## **ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR THOMAS FORTNER LEAVING SDSO**

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The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra announces the departure of Thomas Fortner, assistant conductor and music director of the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra. Mr. Fortner is leaving the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra to pursue new career opportunities in Europe. He will continue in his current post until June 30, 2024.

Mr. Fortner joined the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra seven years ago. During his tenure he stepped in on short notice for music director Delta David Gier to conduct the SDSO in a successful performance of the live-to-film production *Jurassic Park*. He has inventively curated SDSO pops programming like the highly anticipated annual "Tis the Season" Christmas concerts, a sold-out Music of John Williams concert, and the "Celebrate America" program to honor South Dakota veterans. In the last three years, Fortner reinvented the Young People's Concerts, including the first-ever partnership with the Great Plains Zoo. In his role as music director of the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra, Fortner has increased the level of artistic excellence, pushed the boundaries of the youth orchestra's repertoire, and taken the top ensemble to Kansas City, their first performance outside of the state.

Music Director Delta David Gier says about Thomas Fortner, "Our SDSO assistant conductor position is uniquely challenging: the ability to rehearse and conduct a high-level professional ensemble; the ability to educate, rehearse and conduct all levels of youth orchestra, from beginners to highschoolers on the verge of conservatory; the ability to create innovative programs for all of those ensembles; and to have the organizational and communication skills necessary to present these programs and ideas to the public. Thomas has these qualities in spades, and it has been our privilege to benefit from his tireless work on behalf of the SDSO. Personally, it has been a joy to work with him. I only hope the best for Thomas as he takes these very important steps in the next phase of his career."

Executive Director Jennifer Teisinger says, "Thomas has boundless creativity, witty humor, and an optimistic willingness to take on new projects. He greets every new idea with enthusiasm and the SDSO is a better organization because of it. We wish Thomas the very best in Europe!"

The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra will announce search plans for the Assistant Conductor/SDSYO Music Director position shortly.