



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SOUTH DAKOTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
ANNOUNCES THE LAKOTA MUSIC PROJECT *SHARED VISION TOUR* 2025**

Tour takes place October 13 – 18, 2025, beginning on Native American Day at the Crazy Horse Memorial and marks the 4TH tour of the nationally recognized Lakota Music Project (LMP).

World premieres of works by composer Derek Bermel written in collaboration with Creekside Singers drum keeper Emmanuel Black Bear and by composer Jeffrey Paul in collaboration with Bryan Akipa, Dakota cedar flutist, serve as cornerstones of the LMP's collaborative creation focus; tour programs explore shared human experiences of celebration, humor, love and youth demonstrated through music of Lakota, Dakota, and western classical traditions; and tour introduces works by students of South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's (SDSO) Music Composition Academy, which serve young people from tribal communities in South Dakota.

Creative team comprises SDSO Music Director Delta David Gier, Emmanuel Black Bear, Bryan Akipa, Creekside Singers, Ronnie Theisz and Chris Eagle Hawk, storytellers; and Lakota dancers.

Free to all, four of the six Lakota Music Project *Shared Vision Tour* performance venues are located in, or near, the reservations of Pine Ridge, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Rosebud, and Yankton.

(August 12, 2025, Sioux Falls, SD) – The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO) announces the Lakota Music Project Shared Vision Tour 2025. From Oct 13 – 18, the Lakota Music Project (LMP) travels across the state of South Dakota to communities in, and or near, the Pine Ridge, Crow Creek, Sioux, Lower Brule, Rosebud, and Yankton Sioux Reservations, and also to Crazy Horse Memorial and Sioux Falls. This marks the 4th tour featuring the nationally celebrated LMP, which centers the history of multigenerational racial tension disparities in South Dakota

by creating a shared musical experience to demonstrate cooperation and friendship between Native and non-Native peoples.

To date, over 10,000 people have experienced a Lakota Music Project performance in 12 towns and six reservations across South Dakota from 2009-2021. In October of 2019, the Lakota Music Project performed at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The 2025 tour is the longest tour to date and the first time works from Music Composition Academy students are featured in the program.

“When the SDSO began to engage the with American Indian communities in South Dakota, I embraced advice I received from a friend who grew up on a reservation. He shared that to establish real, lasting relationships, one must “go in for the long haul.” The development of the Lakota Music Project over the past 20 years has been a journey of learning from, and caring for, each other - SDSO musicians and staff alongside our Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota partners,” said Music Director Delta David Gier. “What began as an attempt to address racial prejudice in our state and across our region has grown into a demonstration of friendship. When we travel and perform together, we share a palpable sense that we are all participating in something which will help all of us, not just those in our project but our audiences as well, establish relationships in which respect and understanding can govern our interactions. To be authentically seen and heard by each other is the first step; the sharing of music is a perfect way to open up this kind of understanding. It is my/our desire that these programs will be an encouragement to all who experience them, in cities and reservations alike. May we all strive to become friends, neighbors, and perhaps someday family.”

“Being a part of the LMP and the Creekside singers brings a lot of honor to our families, to utilize our traditional songs with orchestra, it’s not something that they would normally see. Where we come from [Pine Ridge], there is a lot of hopelessness. [With this program], we can share our way of life, our traditional ways which brings us to together, and offer hope in the music. Racial issues are because of ignorance and not knowing. By showing our way of life, we build understanding for who we are as a people,” said Emmanuel Black Bear, Drum Keeper, Creekside Singers.

The 2025 Shared Vision Tour centers shared human experiences of celebration, humor, love and youth. During each tour performance, these ideas will serve as the framework for audiences as they experience music of Lakota, Dakota and western classical traditions. World premieres of two works created through a robust collaborative process, represent a harmonious combination of these unique musical traditions and serve as the cornerstone for the tour. These premieres of works by composer Derek Bermel in collaboration with Creekside Singers drum keeper Emmanuel Black Bear, and by composer Jeffrey Paul in collaboration with Dakota cedar flutist Bryan Akipa, demonstrate of LMP’s collaborative creation focus.

The SDSO’s Lakota Music Project Shared Vision Tour is made possible through the generosity of Dean and Rosemarie Buntrock and the South Dakota Arts Council.

Lakota Music Project

The Lakota Music Project (LMP) is a program developed by the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO) in collaboration with Lakota and Dakota advisors and musicians. LMP planning began in 2005 with the intent of addressing the history of multigenerational racial tension disparities in South Dakota by creating a shared musical experience which could demonstrate cooperation and friendship between Native and non-Native peoples. Music brings people together. Through the love of music, the Lakota Music Project explores what our cultures share and provides a unique opportunity to understand one another. An LMP performance features combinations of SDSO musicians, the Lakota drumming group The Creekside Singers, Dakota cedar flutist Bryan Akipa, all performing music from their distinct musical heritages as well as unique repertoire commissioned for the musicians to play together. These programs typically include a shared meal for the audience and musicians in order to provide opportunity for all to discuss their experience.

Music Composition Academy

The Music Composition Academy (MCA) provides two, week-long admission-free composition summer camps serving primarily Native American middle and high school students in South Dakota. One camp is held in Western South Dakota at Black Hills State University and the other is in Eastern South Dakota at Sisseton Tholleshaug Commons. The camps are always tuition free, with lodging and food provided, to keep the program accessible to all students. Each camp accommodates up to 16 students who spend five days in June or July working one-on-one with a professional composer. By the end of the week, each student has written their own composition for either string quartet or woodwind quintet. When school starts in September, SDSO musicians perform the student compositions at their schools.

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra

Delta David Gier, Music Director

As the state's preeminent arts organization, the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (SDSO) is nationally recognized as a driver for how an orchestra engages with its community. *"Classical institutions like to talk a big game about making social justice a part of their mission, but the South Dakota Symphony and the Lakota Music Project-which commissions works for combinations of Native and non-Native musicians and tours the state-have committed more deeply than most."* – Zach Woolfe, *The New York Times*. Founded in 1922 at Augustana University, the SDSO is now a fully professional 75-member orchestra with a history of performing in towns throughout South Dakota. The SDSO's concert seasons feature a diverse mix of classical and pops programming, performed at the Mary W. Sommervold Concert Hall at the Washington Pavilion. The orchestra's nine full-time musicians make up the Dakota String Quartet and the Dakota Wind Quintet, who perform 150 times annually in schools, health and care facilities, and community centers throughout the region.

Delta David Gier has been Music Director of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra since 2004. Under his direction, the orchestra has been lauded for its programming (including seven ASCAP awards). His series based on the Pulitzer Prize was called "an unprecedented programming innovation" by *the Wall Street Journal* and has included residencies with composers Jennifer Higdon, John Corigliano, Steven Stucky, Zhou Long, John Luther Adams, Paul Moravec, and Theodore Wiprud. During Gier's

tenure the SDSO has expanded its offerings with a complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, numerous world premieres, and semi-staged operas. The recent release of the SDSO's recording of John Luther Adams' *An Atlas of Deep Time* on the Cantaloupe label has received international recognition.

Gier is nationally recognized for championing living composers and his ability to deepen an orchestra's impact in its community. Gier is the 2022 recipient of Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award, which called him "the model of an engaged conductor," a sentiment echoed by writer Alex Ross wrote in *The New Yorker*, "...his group is the model of an engaged orchestra," adding that "the South Dakota Symphony is bolder and savvier in its programming than all but a handful of American ensembles."

[The Lakota Music Project](#) (LMP) was developed under Gier's direction to address racial tension between Native Americans and non-Natives in the region the SDSO serves. Now in its 20th year, the LMP is a side-by-side program with the SDSO and Lakota and Dakota musicians which explores the role music plays in their respective cultures, seeking to engender understanding, trust, and healing between estranged peoples. This program traveled to Washington, D.C. in October 2019 for performances at the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian and the National Cathedral. A recording of the music commissioned for the LMP was released on the Innova label.

Over the last decade the Lakota Music Project has expanded into Bridging Cultures, a broader program which has included projects with several communities in South Dakota including South Asian (tabla player Zakir Hussain; composer Reena Esmail), Arab (with oud artist Simon Shaheen and composer Malek Jandali), Persian (with composers Behzad Ranjbaran and Nilofar Iravani), Chinese (with composers Chen Yi and Zhou Long), and Sudanese/Somali refugees (with the Bernard Woma Ensemble).

Live SDSO performances are heard by over 30,000 people including 15,000 children annually. Additionally, SDSO concerts are livestreamed and available free of charge through a partnership with South Dakota Public Broadcasting. A robust digital library includes virtual recitals, music education videos, and podcasts.

Education is a fundamental priority for the SDSO, which offers programs including the long-standing annual Young People's Concerts for over 4,000 third and fourth graders, the South Dakota Symphony Youth Orchestra, Young Musician Concerto Competition, Music Composition Academy, and regular engagements throughout the academic year by the Dakota String Quartet and Dakota Wind Quintet in Sioux Falls Public Schools.

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra: Shared Vision Tour Schedule

World premieres of works by composer Derek Bermel in collaboration with Creekside Singers drum keeper Emmanuel Black Bear and by composer Jeffrey Paul in collaboration with Bryan Akipa, Dakota cedar flutist, serve as cornerstones of the LMP's collaborative creation focus; tour programs explore shared human experiences of celebration, humor, love and youth demonstrated through music of Lakota, Dakota, and western classical traditions; and tour introduces works by students of South Dakota Symphony Orchestra's (SDSO) Music Composition Academy, which serves young people from tribal communities in South Dakota.

Delta David Gier, Music Director

Creekside Singers:

Emmanuel Black Bear

Ari Black Bear

Tim Black Bear

Hanna Gasdia

Talon Mesteth

Brent Spoonhunter

Lakota Dancers

Bryan Akipa, cedar flute

Ronnie Theisz, storyteller

Chris Eagle Hawk, storyteller

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra musicians

Doosook Kim* (violin)

Magdalena Modzelewski* (violin)

Ioana Galu (viola)

Robbie Erhard (Cello)

James DeVoll (flute)

Jeff Paul* (oboe)

Irina Chang (clarinet)

Dan Kitchens (French horn)

John Tomkins* (bassoon)

* Denotes involvement with the LMP since the beginning of the project.

Lakota Music Project
Performance Schedule
October 2025

DAY/DATE	TIME	PLACE
<u>Mon. Oct. 13</u> (public)	10:30am-11:30am (MST)	Crazy Horse Memorial – Visitor Center
<u>Mon. Oct. 13</u> (public)	1:00pm – 2:30pm (MST)	Crazy Horse Memorial – Visitor Center
<u>Tues. Oct. 14</u> (public)	5:00pm – 6:30pm (MST)	Lakota Tech HS Gym – Pine Ridge, SD
<u>Wed. Oct. 15</u> (students)	1:30pm – 2:30pm (CST)	Chamberlain HS Theater – Chamberlain, SD
<u>Wed. Oct. 15</u> (public)	5:30pm – 6:30pm (CST)	Chamberlain HS Theater – Chamberlain, SD
<i>The Chamberlain performance is in partnership with the St. Joseph Indian School.</i>		
<u>Thurs. Oct. 16</u> (public)	5:00pm – 6:30pm (CST)	Sinte Gleska University – Mission, SD Wakinyan Wanbli Multi-Purpose facility Antelope Lake Campus
<u>Fri. Oct. 17</u> (students)	2:00pm – 3:00pm (CST)	Wagner HS Theater – Wagner, SD
<u>Fri. Oct. 17</u> (public)	5:00pm – 6:30pm (CST)	Wagner HS Theater – Wagner, SD
<u>Sat. Oct. 18</u> (public)	7:00pm – 8:30pm (CST)	LSS Multi-Cultural Center – Sioux Falls, SD

All concerts are free to attend. Please visit sdsymphony.org for more information.