

Dear RCO family,

As I sit down to write this, my heart is filled with gratitude for the incredible journey we've shared over the past two years of my assistant conductor fellowship, and the only way I can begin is with thank yous. Thank you to the entire RCO staff for giving a budding conductor full of dreams and ideas the opportunity to learn and test and grow in a supportive environment. To Kelly, thank you for always believing in my potential and pushing me to be the best I can be. To Amy, thank you for your endless support and allowing me to bring my own personal touch to the organization. I've learned so much from the way that the two of you lead an organization, and it has been truly a gift to be part of the process during these two years.

The role of an assistant conductor is a unique one. It involves serving as the conductor's ears in rehearsals, ensuring their vision is realized, and being ready to step in and lead at a moment's notice. Beyond the rehearsal hall, I was also able to forge bonds within the community, connect with the young people of Reno during school visits, and build relationships with donors and patrons alike. I am so grateful for the freedom I was given to create new initiatives in support of the RCO vision, and I will always cherish the collaborative environment that motivated me to continue such important work.

It's not often that you find an organization that matches your own personal vision and mission of what the classical music industry should be, and in the RCO, it felt like I met my perfect match. I was able to bring my ideas about building community around an orchestra, challenging the status quo, and prioritizing educational outreach. It felt like we were all on the same measure of a musical score, moving towards a future of innovation and promise.

One of my favorite things about this orchestra is the way the musicians are a family. Their love for music and their community; their commitment to high quality music making; their willingness and eagerness to experiment and try new things; and their welcoming, warm, and supportive attitude are all qualities I so greatly admire and will take with me on the next steps of my conducting journey. This communal drive to engage and inspire through music is a feeling that I feel so privileged to have experienced in these past couple of years with the musicians of the RCO.

To the even bigger RCO family of audience members, donors, and staff members, thank you for welcoming me into your family. There is a part of me that cannot imagine a life without the RCO, but as we say in Spanish, *el camino es largo y pronto nos veremos* (the road is long and we will see each other soon)!

With love and gratitude,

Sara Melissa Aldana Pamplona