

KANSAS will rock on with USD Symphony in Aalfs Auditorium Friday

By David Lias

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"We just play ... the conductor follows us."

That's how Rich Williams, guitarist and one of the original members of the legendary rock band, KANSAS, describes the process that occurs as the band continues its Collegiate Symphony Tour.

The band's latest stop this week will be the University of South Dakota campus. KANSAS will perform with the USD Symphony Orchestra at 8 p.m. Friday, April 20 at Aalfs Auditorium inside Slagle Hall.

KANSAS began its Collegiate Symphony Tour in 2010, and the success of melding the rock band's music with orchestras across the country continues to gain momentum. The tour continued all through last year, and is still going strong in 2012.

One of the goals of the 2012 KANSAS Collegiate Symphony Tour is to help raise funds and awareness for college and university music programs.

"We did an album with the London Symphony Orchestra 13 years ago, and since then we've been playing with a lot of different city orchestras and some college orchestras, too," Williams said.

As the 35th anniversary of KANSAS approached in 2009, he said, the band returned to its roots in Topeka, KS, and filmed a documentary to celebrate the milestone. It includes a performance of KANSAS with the 50-piece Washburn University Orchestra.

"Once the project was out, some other schools started showing interest in this, and we really enjoy working with the college students," Williams said. "Playing with a symphony is

great, but there is something extra special about working with college kids."

Following the success of its 2009 anniversary performance, KANSAS began the arduous task of scheduling its Collegiate Symphony Tour. Its sponsor, D'Addario & Co., has made the event a reality going into its third year now.

In addition to playing with the five-member rock band on stage, the 30-piece USD Symphony Orchestra directed by Richard Rognstad, D.M.A., will also receive a \$4,000 in-kind product donation and a \$1,000 scholarship donation from D'Addario & Co.

"What a tremendous opportunity this is for our music students," said Timothy Farrell, D.M.A., chair of the department of music at USD. "Having the chance to play with a rock band like KANSAS is the experience of a lifetime."

Best known for the hit singles "Carry On Wayward Son" and "Dust In The Wind," KANSAS has released 23 studio albums, including the Platinum-selling "Leftover" (1976), "Point of No Return" (1977), "Monolith" (1979), and "The Best of KANSAS" (1984) since their debut album, "Kansas" hit the charts in 1974.

The concert will hardly be a clash between two highly different styles of music. Williams said the styling of KANSAS fits very well with the sounds of a symphony orchestra.

"We've always been very symphonic in nature," he said. "It works very well. There are always some difficulties to get through, and some people may think it's very hard to play together, but it's really not."

"We show up, and our conductor shows up and works



KANSAS will arrive on the USD campus to perform with the USD Symphony Orchestra Friday as part of its 2012 Collegiate Symphony Tour.

with the orchestra ... the charts are advanced to them, and so we run through a few songs with them during the afternoon, and perform a sound check, and we're pretty much ready to go," Williams said. "We just play; the

conductor follows us, and in turn he conducts the symphony to follow us. All of the hard work is done by the conductor."

And, he added, everyone from the musicians to the audience has

a lot of fun at each event.

"It's a bunch of hicks from Kansas with a little bit of spit and polish," Williams said, laughing. "It's still rock 'n roll."

Concert tickets are on sale at

the Department of Music Offices at the Warren M. Lee Center for the Fine Arts at (605) 677-5274 or email music@usd.edu. Tickets are also available at <http://www.tickets300.com>.

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