

# Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra performs holiday classics



Soprano Kimberly McCord makes her Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra debut during “A Very Merry Holiday Spectacular” on Dec. 19 at Lincoln-Way North Performing Arts Center in Frankfort and Dec. 20 at Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet. (Photo courtesy of Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra)

**Jessi Virtusio** Daily Southtown

Some musical takes on sleighs, plus several guests, are among the attractions at Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's next concert.

"A Very Merry Holiday Spectacular" is set for Dec. 19 at Lincoln-Way North Performing Arts Center in Frankfort and Dec. 20 at Rialto Square Theatre in Joliet.

"It's so great that this orchestra gives the chance for people to have a live musical experience and not have to go to downtown Chicago," said Kimberly McCord, featured soprano.

"As a singer, you literally feel the vibrations of what you're doing flow throughout your body and especially when you sing with the orchestra. This is why live performance is so important for people to get a taste of."

Making her debut with the IPO, McCord sings George Frideric Handel's "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" from "Messiah," Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Exsultate, jubilate" and Pietro Mascagni's "Ava Maria."

"'Exsultate, jubilate' of Mozart's is like a condensed concerto for voice," McCord said. "It has the opening movement inviting people to praise and celebrate with the singer. The middle movement has contrast, being extremely graceful and feminine. Then it ends with a bang, almost an explosion of joy."

"'Rejoice greatly' from the Christmas portion of 'Messiah,' in itself, is a three-part structure: very joyful, more contemplative and praying for peace in our world, then turning to joyful anticipation of peace on Earth."

"Ava Maria" was a suggestion McCord, a Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus member, made to Victor Yampolsky, guest conductor for "A Very Merry Holiday Spectacular."

"There are people at a Christmas concert who are hurting. Sometimes it's a time of year when there's not a lot of places for those feelings. This piece gives you a space for that. It's a really poignant addition to the program," said McCord, who has a small role in Lyric's "Bel Canto" through Jan. 17.

The IPO show includes Mozart's "Sleigh Ride" from "Three German Dances," Sergei Prokofiev's Troika movement from "Lieutenant Kije" and Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride."

The show also features "Waltz of the Flowers" and "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker," selections from Engelbert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" and Park Forest-based Grande Prairie Singers joining IPO for Anderson's "A Christmas Festival."

"Maestro Yampolsky is an old-school conductor," McCord said. "He has a deep understanding of music that orchestra members and soloists sense. It goes beyond his understanding of the repertoire and the breadth of his experience. It's just really a deep love of music that sharpens everyone's game."

*Jessi Virtusio is a freelance reporter for the Daily Southtown.*

## **Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra**

**When/Where:** 8 p.m. Dec. 19 at Lincoln-Way North Performing Arts Center, 19900 S. Harlem Ave., Frankfort; 3 p.m. Dec. 20 at Rialto Square Theatre, 102 N. Chicago St., Joliet

**Tickets:** starting at \$25; student and group rates also available

**Information:** 708-481-7774 or [ipomusic.org](http://ipomusic.org); 815-726-6600 or [rialtosquare.com](http://rialtosquare.com)

**Etc.:** "A Very Merry Holiday Spectacular" features guest conductor Victor Yampolsky, soprano Kimberly McCord and Grande Prairie Singers; family-friendly activities and preconcert musical entertainment takes place an hour before each performance in the lobby.