

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's **Christina Salerno** Named **Executive Director of the Year** by Illinois Council of Orchestras

**CHICAGO (March 21, 2022)** – The Illinois Council of Orchestras (ICO) has bestowed a major award upon Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) naming IPO's **Christina Salerno** as the 2022 Executive Director of the Year.

The accolade was part of ICO's annual awards for excellence in the field of music performance and for support of musical organizations. An awards panel of judges drawn from the Illinois Council of Orchestras Board of Directors and independent professional conductors and musicians reviewed nominations representing orchestras, youth orchestras, and chamber ensembles from throughout Illinois.

"With the deepest appreciation, it has truly been a pleasure to be at the helm of IPO over these past five years and I am humbled and grateful for this incredible honor," said Salerno. "This orchestra is filled with talented, energetic, and empathetic musicians, board members, staff, volunteers, and audiences - all of whom contribute daily to our orchestra's successes, and without whom progress on artistic, programmatic, and organizational fronts would be impossible at any time, but especially during a global pandemic!"

Facing a historic pandemic that silenced nearly all live music entities worldwide, Salerno navigated IPO's response to include more, not fewer, opportunities for the orchestra to achieve financial and artistic accomplishments, while implementing successful survival strategies that enhanced IPO's viability with innovative advancements during the pandemic.

While initiating a major endowment fund campaign during a pandemic would seem to be doomed and lead to disappointing results, Salerno instead succeeded wonderfully. The launch of IPO's *Campaign for The Future* endowment fund soon advanced from the initial \$2,000,000 Salerno had been essential in obtaining, to nearly \$4,000,000 by the time the 2020-21 season finished.

To deal with the changes necessitated by the pandemic, Salerno inaugurated IPO's *Reimagined Season*, beginning with outdoor concerts of chamber music at Olympia Fields Country Club



which were played before live audiences under a large tent limited to the requisite 50 patrons in socially distanced configurations. To maximize the reach of these concerts, Salerno scheduled these performances to be limited in duration and repeated later that same evening, thus achieving a doubling of the 50-person limit. These concerts were subsequently broadcast online for the enjoyment of those not inclined to attend live concerts.

Also enhancing IPO's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion efforts, Salerno used her experiences with the DuPage County arts scene, pairing Illinois Philharmonic with the famous, award-winning Anima (formerly Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus). Anima and IPO then co-commissioned noted American composer Augusta Read Thomas for a new work based on the Bronzeville poems of former Illinois Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Gwendolyn Brooks. Brooks was one of the great cultural leaders of Chicago's Bronzeville. Salerno has actuated IPO's plans to perform and record this new work with Anima in the spring of 2023 – an event that has been postponed due to the pandemic.

Other accomplishments under Salerno's leadership include increased membership of the IPO Board in both numbers and community representation, executing IPO's second Virtual Gala which netted more money than previous in-person celebrations and featured virtual performances by IPO musicians as well as Metropolitan Opera baritone Jeff Matsey, world-renowned violinist Rachel Barton Pine, and New York Philharmonic Principal Clarinet, Anthony McGill.

Salerno's win comes on the heels of IPO being named Professional Orchestra of the Year in 2020, the third time the orchestra has won this prestigious award.

### **ABOUT IPO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHRISTINA SALERNO**

Appointed the Executive Director of Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra in January 2017, Christina Salerno joined the symphonic world having spent seven years as Executive Director of Salt Creek Ballet (SCB). While at SCB, Ms. Salerno led a campaign to build all new sets and costumes for the company's annual production of *The Nutcracker* and successfully brought live orchestral accompaniment back to the production. Her passion for increasing the visibility and capacity of arts organizations has led her to lead initiatives aimed at increasing contributed and earned revenue levels, developing board capacity, and building innovative community engagement programming.

Prior to moving to the management side of arts organizations, Salerno enjoyed a 15-year professional ballet career as a soloist with Boston Ballet, Zurich Ballet and The Royal Ballet in London.

Salerno holds a Masters of Performing Arts Administration degree from Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in Nonprofit Administration from Skidmore College. She has appeared as a guest lecturer for Loyola University's Dance Department and Arts Reach, and currently serves as treasurer for the Illinois Council of Orchestras and VP Philanthropy of the Hinsdale-Clarendon Hills chapter of the National Charity League.

## **ABOUT THE ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**

IPO celebrates its 44<sup>th</sup> season in 2021/22. Under the leadership of Music Director Stilian Kirov and Executive Director Christina Salerno, the mission of IPO is to provide compelling professional symphonic music, support music education, and expand audience awareness of musical excellence for the diverse communities of the greater Chicago region.

During the 2021/22 season, IPO will perform several classical concerts at their home venue, Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL. In addition, the orchestra performs a myriad of educational youth offerings each year and performs a summer chamber series, IPO Summer @ Olympia Fields Country Club.

Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra is supported in part by the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, the Illinois Arts Council Agency, National Endowment for the Arts, Michuda Construction, and Southland Arts. For more information, visit [ipomusic.org](http://ipomusic.org).

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