



Stilian Kirov, Music Director

CELEBRATING 45 SEASONS

ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

ADVANCING CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THE SOUTHLAND

ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC TO PERFORM HANDEL'S *MESSIAH* FOR ANNUAL HOLIDAY CONCERT

*Special guests include Grammy Award
winning Baritone Bill McMurray, Soprano
Kimberly E. Jones, Mezzo-Soprano Leah
Dexter, Tenor Ryan Townsend Strand, and the
Chicago Community Chorus*



PARK FOREST, IL (November 14th, 2022) - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Holiday traditions are some of the most treasured, and Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of **Maestro Stilian Kirov**, is proud to produce a holiday concert offering for the ages as they perform Handel's *Messiah* on December 17th at 3p (CST) at the 1,100 seat Ozinga Chapel on the grounds of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL.

In what promises to be a dynamic performance of a holiday classic, powered by thunderous vocals alongside a delightful orchestral accompaniment, IPO welcomes a number of special guest artists to the stage with them for this concert, including Grammy Award winning baritone **Bill McMurray**, soprano **Kimberly E. Jones**, mezzo-soprano **Leah Dexter**, tenor **Ryan Townsend Strand** and the **Chicago Community Chorus**.

Tickets for the performance start at just \$35 and can be purchased at IPOmusic.org or by calling the IPO Box Office at 708-481-7774. Student tickets are also available for just \$10. IPO also offers a Concert Shuttle Bus from downtown Flossmoor to the concert venue and back for \$20.

SPECIAL GUEST ARTISTS

With more than forty operatic roles to his credit, **Bill McMurray** has been described as “a baritone with warm, rich tones and superb stage presence” by the *Durham Herald Sun*. Such roles include “Figaro” in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, “Count Almaviva” in *Le nozze di Figaro* and “Escamillo” in *Carmen*. Walter Marini of the *New Buffalo Times* states “[as] a powerful actor who brings great elegance to the role [“Marcello” in *La Boheme*], his singing is as fine as anything being heard in major opera houses today.” Recent engagements include his debut with

Opera San Antonio as “Marullo” in *Rigoletto*, and “Ibn Hakia” in Tchaikovsky’s opera *Iolanta*, and “The Father” in the Midwest premiere of Stefan Weisman’s opera *The Scarlet Ibis*, both with Chicago Opera Theater.

Soprano **Kimberly Eileen Jones** is an alum of the Ryan Opera Center with the prestigious Lyric Opera of Chicago. She made her Grant Park Festival debut as Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) and Adele (*Die Fledermaus*) and has performed the Philip Glass Symphony #5 at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Germany, and with the Stuttgart and Danish Radio Symphonies in Germany and Copenhagen. She has performed at the Chicago Cultural Center in Preston Bradley Hall, with the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, the Chicago Sinfonietta, South Bend Symphony, Chicago Opera Theater, Long Beach Opera, Fox Valley Symphony, and Fort Wayne Symphony, and is recurring artist with the Michigan City Chamber Music Festival. Miss Jones is on the voice faculty at Roosevelt University and DePaul University.

Mezzo-Soprano **Leah Dexter** is a Detroit area native who, in addition to her stunning vocal capabilities, studied the violin and cello for many years and attended the University of Michigan for her musical degrees. She is a past Studio Artist of Sarasota Opera, at which she won the Anne J’ O Donnell Outstanding Artist Award for her work with the company. A frequent artist with Chicago Opera Theater, Dexter has also performed with Detroit Opera, Chicago Sinfonietta, the University of Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This season Dexter will make her debut with the Urbana-Champaign Symphony and will debut a concert performance and subsequent commercial recording with Northwestern University and Cedille Records as alto soloist in Garrop’s acclaimed oratorio *Terra Nostra*.

Tenor **Ryan Townsend Strand** is a Minnesota native whose “beautiful vocalism” (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and “pliant tenor” (*Chicago Classical Review*) have afforded him an expanding career as a concert and oratorio soloist. Strand was a featured soloist with Apollo Chorus performing Bach’s *Johannes-Passion* with the Elmhurst Symphony. Strand made his Chicago opera debut with the Haymarket Opera Company and has also performed with Elmhurst Symphony, Northwestern Opera Theater, Chicago Opera Theater. Strand regularly performs with Chicago Symphony Chorus, Music of the Baroque, Stare at the Sun, Bella Voce, William Ferris Chorale and the Grant Park Festival Chorus. He is also a founding member and executive director of Constellation Men’s Ensemble in Chicago.

The **Chicago Community Chorus** numbers over 130 singers from all walks of life and levels of musical experience. The Chicago Community Chorus has appeared everywhere from Chicago’s renowned concert halls to small, local venues. Dr. Hampton, Founder/Artistic Director of CCC, is also an organ performer, conductor, composer, educator, church musician, adjudicator, and workshop clinician.

ABOUT ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

IPO celebrates its 45th anniversary season in 2022-23. Under the leadership of Music Director Stilian Kirov and Christina Salerno (2022 Illinois Council of Orchestras ‘Executive Director of the Year), 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 this milestone anniversary season, the three-time Illinois Council of Orchestras “Professional Orchestra of the Year” 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 via their educational arm - The Marilyn Tannebaum Educational Institute. IPO also performs an annual summer chamber series, IPO Summer @ Olympia Fields Country Club.

From its community orchestra roots in Park Forest, the 69-member orchestra has grown into a critically acclaimed professional regional orchestra. Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra is supported in part by the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, Ozinga Foundation, the Walder Foundation, Gerhard Manufacturing and Design, Northern Trust, and the Illinois Arts Council Agency. For more information, visit ipomusic.org.

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