



**Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra to present
IPO Music Educator of the Year Award
to Stacy Williams-Jackson
of Lincoln-Way Community High School District 210**
*Presentation to Take Place at IPO's "An Enchanted Evening"
Celebration Gala on April 25th*

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Park Forest, IL – For only the second time in the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's storied history, the 48-year-old organization will present their Music Educator of the Year award on April 25, 2026. The recipient of this prestigious award will be **Stacy Williams-Jackson**, Lincoln-Way Central High School and Lincoln-Way West High School Orchestra Director, Lincoln-Way Central Music Department Chair, and President of the Illinois Music Education Association (ILMEA).

The Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra Music Educator of the Year Award recognizes outstanding music educators who teach in public schools, private schools, community programs, or as a private music instructor, from kindergarten through college. The award made its debut in 2025 when it was awarded to Ron Harrigan of Southland College Prep Charter High School.

Mrs. Williams-Jackson was selected based on her exemplary work within the Lincoln-Way Central and West High Schools, along with her leadership within the Illinois Music Education Association and across the region.

"I am absolutely flattered to receive this award," says Mrs. Williams-Jackson. "Music education has been my life's work, and it is such a joy. To be recognized with an award like this, especially by an esteemed organization such as IPO for which I have so much respect and admiration for, it is both humbling and extremely exciting for me."

A music teacher for Lincoln-Way District 210 since 1997, Mrs. Williams-Jackson has served as music department chair for Lincoln-Way Central High School since 2002. She directs the orchestra programs at Lincoln-Way Central and Lincoln-Way West and has previously taught guitar and music technology. In addition to orchestra and general music, Williams-Jackson created an adaptive music class that continues to be taught throughout the district annually. After school, she leads the Lincoln-Way Central Jazz Band program, is the advisor for the Lincoln-Way Central Chapter of the Illinois Music Honor Society and directs the Lincoln-Way



Symphony Orchestra. She was the director of the Lincoln-Way Youth Strings program from 1997-2008 and serves as the producer/director of the annual Lincoln-Way Rock Orchestra each summer.

Mrs. Williams-Jackson's efforts are not limited to the Chicago Southland region but extend throughout the entire state of Illinois. Elected in 2023 by the Illinois Music Education Association to serve as State President through 2029, Williams-Jackson has also served ILMEA as District 1 Jazz Representative (2003-2008) and District 1 President (2017-2023).

"Educators like Stacy Williams-Jackson are the reason this award exists," says IPO's Executive Director Christina Salerno. "Truly great educators do more than just teach - they make an impression on the lives of young people and Mrs. Williams-Jackson has done that tenfold. It is an honor for us to be able to shine a spotlight on someone so richly deserving of one."

"I am honored to celebrate Stacy Williams-Jackson as IPO's Educator of the Year," beams Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's Education Director, Roosevelt Griffin Ed.D. "Stacy has been a leader and trailblazer in our field for many years, and her impact has extended far beyond her own classroom. Now serving as president of the Illinois Music Education Association, she epitomizes excellence in music education. After nearly 25 years in the profession, I, along with many veteran educators, continue to be inspired by her work. I couldn't be more excited that the IPO is recognizing someone who exemplifies the power of music education the way she does."

The 2026 Music Educator of the Year award will be presented at IPO's annual gala, this year entitled "An Enchanted Evening." Slated for April 25, 2026 at Olympia Fields Country Club, this magical night celebrates IPO's achievements as Chicago Southland's leading professional orchestra, highlighting their commitment to presenting outstanding live performances and transformative youth music educational programming via IPO's Marilyn Tannebaum Youth Music Education Institute.

The event features an enchanted premiere of Enrique Granados' *Spanish Dances*, newly arranged for harp by Lisa Tannebaum and energetically performed by Tannebaum and the Grainger Academy of The Joffrey Ballet. An amazing silent auction with online bidding, cocktails, gourmet dinner, dessert, and post dinner dancing are also included in the evening.

The gala is open to the public. Tickets are just \$175 per person and \$200 per after April 8, 2026. More information and tickets can be purchased at IPOmusic.org/ipo-gala-2026.

ABOUT ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The 2025/26 concert season marks the 48th for Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, the three-time Illinois Council of Orchestras "Professional Orchestra of the Year." Under the leadership of Gibb Music Director Stilian Kirov and Executive Director Christina Salerno, the mission of IPO is to utilize the universal expression of music to create profound, inspiring and personal connections between the people and communities of Chicago's Southland.



During the 2025/26 season, IPO will perform several classical concerts at their home venue, the state-of-the-art, 1,100 seat Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL, while continuing to strengthen a partnership with the Center for Performing Arts at Governors State University for one concert. In addition to live orchestral concerts, IPO presents a myriad of educational youth offerings each year via its educational arm - The Marilyn Tannebaum Youth Music Education 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 Center for Performing Arts at Governors State University, Ozinga Foundation, Gerhard Manufacturing and Design, Michuda Construction, Old National Bank, and the Illinois Arts Council. For more information, visit ipomusic.org.

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