

ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA REACHES \$5.1 MILLION FUNDRAISING GOAL

Campaign for the Future Endowment Comes to Fruition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 18th, 2026

Park Forest, IL – What began as a determined dream for the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra has become a reality. In March of 2020, one week before COVID-19 would change the world, IPO launched its *Campaign for the Future*, a bold fundraising effort with the goal of raising \$5.1 million to create an institutional endowment fund to ensure that key elements of the mission and strategic future of the Orchestra would be secured in perpetuity.

In July of 2026, that goal was accomplished as IPO crossed the finish line with \$5.1 million in pledges and gifts from 102 families. Reflecting the transformative power that comes from uniting people around a shared dream, donor gifts ranged from meaningful \$25 contributions to multiple inspirational six-figure gifts provided by eight families.

Over the past six years, IPO has increased program activity by 50%, enjoyed sold-out auditoriums, and found new ways to connect with area families, all while remaining committed to the Campaign's Vision to:

- Fortify IPO as the premier provider for classical music and crossover arts experiences in Chicago's Southland community;
- Invest in IPO's regional impact through expansion and innovation;
- Advance the Orchestra's engagement within the community through multi-tiered educational partnerships; and
- Become the Orchestra of our community by cultivating broader and deeper relationships with the individuals and organizations that celebrate and elevate orchestral music and our region.

"We are extremely proud to have proven that Chicago's southern suburbs are capable and deserving of major cultural investment through the completion of our *Campaign for the Future*," says IPO Executive Director Christina Salerno. "While IPO is made up of many individuals – artists, students, audiences, and staff – we intend for the impact of this Campaign to be bigger than our institution. This is about investment in community, in music, and in the power of individual generosity as a pathway to making big things happen. Since our beginnings as an all-volunteer orchestra in 1954, IPO has proven itself to be a vital thread in the Southland's cultural fabric, and we are humbled that so many area families have been inspired to participate in this collaborative effort."

IPO's *Campaign for the Future* launched with a \$3 million gift from The Davee Foundation, given as a parting contribution before the foundation ceased operations. The campaign was nearly complete when Linda D. and Craig C. Grannon pledged a significant bequest through IPO's Encore Society to establish the Grannon Second Violin Chair endowment, after having sponsored Second Violin Principal Linda Veleckis' position since 1998 through annual giving. This newly endowed chair celebrates the transformational impact Linda D. and Craig C. Grannon have had on IPO and the South Suburbs and now ensures ongoing funding to support a valued member of the Orchestra. A final anonymous family donation provided the remaining \$30,000 cash contribution needed to complete the \$5.1 million Campaign in July 2026.

"Linda and I have been supporters of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra for decades, and have underwritten the Second Violin Chair since the IPO started naming various chairs back in 1998," recalls Craig C. Grannon. "We are now creating an endowment, in our estate plan, to name the Grannon Second Violin Chair and are very pleased to have been able to create this."

"Having held the Principal Second Violin chair for many years, I have been deeply honored and moved by the Grannon's extraordinary generosity and steadfast commitment to the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra," says violinist Linda Veleckis. "Their endowment of this position reflects a meaningful and enduring partnership between patrons and musicians, as well as their heartfelt belief that great music deserves lasting investment. I am truly grateful for their friendship and for the legacy they are building—one that will continue to strengthen IPO and its musicians for generations to come."

IPO Gibb Music Director Stilian Kirov sees the endowment as more than merely affection of one musician's talents or one favorite instrument, but rather a deep belief in the overall organization. "An endowed chair is more than a gift; it is a lasting investment in artistic excellence. Supporting the musicians of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra in this manner helps ensure they can continue sharing extraordinary performances with our community for years to come."

In addition to the Grannon endowment, the 2023 commitment made by Andrea and Richard Gibb establishing Maestro Kirov as the Gibb Music Director marked an earlier important milestone for the Campaign. Always one with an eye on the future and a finger on the financial pulse of the orchestra, the Gibbs have been integral to the overall health of the organization.

"Generosity from The Davee Foundation, annual funding appeals, and successful Grant Awards has allowed the IPO to invest in artistic excellence, many more concert events, and youth education programs," shares Richard Gibb. "When the IPO Board looked into its future and determined that only a more stabilized financial future would allow this effort to continue, we envisioned the development of an endowment fund that would support continued professionalism in the musicians' group, musical staff leadership, support staff functions, concert program development, and youth educational programs."

"Along with the entire IPO Board, Andrea and I supported this initiative and are pleased to see early aspects of goals already obtained. We welcome the opportunity for future generations to experience the creativity and joy that only a thriving orchestra like IPO can provide."

IPO's *Campaign for the Future* began under then-Board President Dr. Michael Rogers, with Kathleen Field Orr, Barbara Sturges, and Karen Hoag assuming the key leadership position and helping to steward the effort forward throughout their tenures.

“At the start, it was a bigger challenge than IPO had ever taken on,” recalls past President Kathleen Field Orr. “In hindsight, I should never have had any reservations that we would make it.”

Barbara Sturges sees the accomplishment as further justification of what IPO means to the Chicago Southland area. “IPO's success in reaching our endowment goal is tangible evidence of the value the orchestra has to the community,” she says proudly. “I am honored, with the help of my late husband, to have helped reach that goal, and happy and proud to be a part of the IPO's hardworking, dedicated family.”

Not surprisingly, Karen Hoag agrees with Ms. Sturges' outlook.

“IPO has been inspiring audiences for decades with its programming, talented musicians, and gifted music directors,” Hoag remarked. “With the completion of IPO's capital campaign, the tables have turned, and it is the audiences and patrons who have inspired the IPO. The completion of the Campaign means IPO will be able to continue its awe-inspiring work for decades to come.”

In a full-circle moment, Dr. Michael Rogers was Board President when IPO's *Campaign for the Future* began and is once again its President as the Campaign goal is realized.

“I am thrilled we have achieved our goal to create an endowment for our orchestra. This transformational achievement creates a stable, lifelong income source for vibrant programs and widespread educational outreach in the South Suburbs. It is a tribute to generosity both within the orchestra and from the communities it serves.”

Executive Director Christina Salerno is quick to note that the completion of the *Campaign for the Future* also marks a new beginning.

“In celebrating this remarkable milestone in the history of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, it is important to know that our strategic vision is not yet complete,” she says. “We will celebrate our 50th year as a professional orchestra in 2027/28, and in so doing will dedicate ourselves to positioning the IPO for the next 50 years. We plan to be here, in your community, bringing great music close to home.”

ABOUT ILLINOIS PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The 2026/27 concert season marks the 49th 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 2026/27 season, IPO will perform several classical concerts in two venues, the Center for Performing Arts at Governors State University and Lincoln-Way North High School in Frankfort, IL. 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 Gerhard Manufacturing and Design, Old National Bank, Ozinga Foundation, Michuda Construction, Suburban Service League, Music Performance Trust Fund, Craig and Janet Duchossois, and the Illinois Arts Council. For more information, visit IPOmusic.org.

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