

The Guild Gazette

storytelling that moves people

LEAGUE OF AMERICAN
ORCHESTRAS

Gold Award
of Excellence

BALTIMORE · JUNE 2026

HOW IT WORKS

One editor. Every story.

- Editorial Planning**
Monthly calendar built around the ISO season — driven entirely by editorial judgment.
- Original Reporting**
Editor conducts all interviews — musicians, donors, staff, board members.
- Writing & Editing**
Every word written by the editor. One voice. Pure editorial integrity.
- Hybrid Publishing**
Teaser in Constant Contact + full feature on the ISO website. Evergreen content.
- Broad Distribution**
Reaches ticket holders, donors, fundraiser attendees — far beyond membership.

READER IMPACT

Numbers that matter.

60%

OPEN RATE

Nearly double the industry

93%

Feel more
connected to
ISO &
musicians

8.5/10

Overall value
score — median:
9

WHAT READERS DO NEXT

More motivated to
support ISO's mission 51%

Shared ISO news with
friends or family 44%

Attended a concert they
might have missed 28%

Made or increased a
donation to the ISO 26%

“It is our best outreach
document.

“Informative, well written and
has a wonderful personality
behind its creation.

“This outreach has been
needed for a long time. It will
only grow in importance to
the ISO.

“It makes me feel like the ISO is
My Orchestra!”

— ISO Season Ticket Holder

UNIFIED STRATEGY

One brand. Two communities.

ILLINOIS
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA
THE UMBRELLA

The Guild Gazette

UNIFIED ISO GUILD VOICE

Constant
Contact

Digest +
Read More
links

ISO
Website

Full features
· Evergreen
SEO

BN
Gazette

Launching
Aug 2026

2,500+

Recipients —
well beyond
Guild
membership
alone

Season Ticket Holders

Single Ticket Buyers Donors

Fundraiser Attendees

ISO Community

“The Gazette makes me feel
connected to the music world even
though I don't get out as much as I
used to.”

“It showcases all the many great
ways our organization, education
programs, and auxiliary groups are
serving central Illinois.”

“Thoughtful, intentional, and
appreciated.”

"The newsletter gets people in the door. The website keeps the door open."

◆ ILLINOIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA · SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS
LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS · BALTIMORE · JUNE 2026



ILLINOIS SYMPHONY GUILD
OF SPRINGFIELD

The Guild Gazette

April 2026

Welcome to the April Issue of the Guild Gazette!

Welcome to the April edition of the Guild Gazette, where spring brings a full bloom of music, celebration, and community across the Illinois Symphony Orchestra family. In this issue, we look ahead to **Simple Gifts**, a luminous program that traces the many colors of the American soundscape, and we roll out the red carpet for **A Night of Glitz, Glamour & Giving**, the Guild's major fundraiser of the season. You'll also find stories that highlight the heart of our mission—from the generosity of host families and the joyful chaos of Pie Day, to a behind-the-scenes conversation with ISO's own Beth Wakefield, updates from our education programs, and a showcase of emerging young talent in this year's Scholarship Auditions. There's much to celebrate this month, and we're delighted to share it with you.

Learn more about the Symphony Guild: [click here](#)

Simple Gifts

Friday, April 10, 2026 7:30PM
First Presbyterian Church - Springfield

The Simple Gifts program offers a beautifully balanced journey through three distinct voices in the American musical landscape—each one revealing something different about our national character and the orchestra's expressive range.

George Walker's *Lyric for Strings* opens the program with its unmistakable tenderness. Longtime ISO listeners will appreciate how its quiet intensity allows the string section to shine in pure, singing lines—an intimate, heartfelt curtain-raiser.

Ernest Bloch's Concerto Grosso No. 1 brings a striking shift in color and energy. Its Baroque-inspired structure gives the ensemble plenty to play with, while the 20th-century harmonic bite keeps the music lively and fresh. It's a piece that shows off the orchestra's agility and the piano's role as both partner and provocateur.



The evening culminates in Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, a work that needs no introduction for many of our listeners. Still, each performance reveals new contours—the spacious calm of its opening pages, the glowing optimism of its climactic variations on "Simple Gifts," and the unmistakable sense of American possibility that has made it a touchstone for generations.

Taichi Fukumura, Music Director

Walker Lyric for Strings – Bloch Concerto Grosso No. 1 for String Orchestra and Piano – Copland Appalachian Spring

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)



A Night of Glitz, Glamor, and Giving

A Night of Glitz, Glamour & Giving

It's almost gala time! Join us Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 5:00 PM at the President Abraham Lincoln Springfield – a DoubleTree

by Hilton Hotel for the Illinois Symphony Guild's major fundraiser of the season. Your attendance directly supports the essential operating needs of our Illinois Symphony Orchestra.

Gala Chair Kristy Sullivan, the Illinois Symphony Guild of Springfield, and the ISO Board of Directors invite you to an unforgettable Monte Carlo-inspired celebration. Enjoy elegant dining, spirited live and silent auctions, a dash of games-of-chance

fun, and the dazzling live music of the ISO and ISYO led by Music Director Taichi Fukumura.

We are honored to recognize Dr. Patricia and Mr. Randall Rushing for their longtime dedication to the ISO and their generous service to the Springfield community.

Tickets & Sponsorships

Gala Ticket – \$150

Côte d’Azur Friends Sponsor (2 tickets) – \$500

Riviera Club Table Sponsor – \$2,000

Roll the dice and reserve your place—your support keeps the music playing.

[Buy Tickets](#)



Host Families Needed for ISO Musicians

The Illinois Symphony Orchestra urgently needs Springfield-area host families for our upcoming Simple Gifts concert and the final concert of the season. Even a short two- or three-night stay makes a real difference—and longtime hosts Steve and Joyce Nardulli can tell you just how meaningful it becomes. What started as offering a spare room has turned into years of shared meals, unexpected connections, and friendships that stretch across the globe. Hosting enriches both musician and family in ways no one

anticipates.

Right now, your hospitality directly supports the Symphony by reducing hotel costs and ensuring our musicians feel welcomed and cared for during concert week. All it takes is a comfortable room and simple breakfast. What you give is small; what you gain is lasting.

If you can host—or even think you might—please reach out today.

Contact Jane Schurter at jschurter@ilsymphony.org.

A Delicious Equation: Community + Pie = \$1,500 Raised

Pi Day/Pie Day served up more than just flaky crusts and clever math puns this year—it brought together Guild friends, Youth Orchestra talent, and a whole lot of



joyful energy. From pot pies to performances to a whimsical look at the history of pi, the evening was full of surprises. [CLICK HERE](#) to enjoy the full recap of this spirited March 14 celebration.



Staff Spotlight: When the Music Calls You Back – A Conversation with Beth Wakefield, ISO Director of Marketing

Beth Wakefield traces her return to the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and the role she's played in its growth,

highlighting the organization's adaptability, evolving branding, and the challenge of serving both Springfield and Bloomington-Normal. She emphasizes the passion that drives the ISO, the power of music to connect communities, and the personal joy she finds in the people, performances, and purpose at the heart of the symphony.

[READ MORE](#)

Music Matters - Where Music Meets the Moment

Every season, ISO musicians leave the concert stage behind and head into Central Illinois classrooms — bringing live orchestral music to students who may never have heard it before. The Music Matters program has been making those moments happen for more than twenty years. We take you inside the schools, meet the musicians, and discover what unfolds when a child hears a violin up close for the very first time.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Symphony Guild Scholarship Auditions Showcase Emerging Talent

Young musicians from across central Illinois brought exceptional skill and poise to this year's Symphony Guild Scholarship Auditions, filling the afternoon with performances that reflected both dedication and promise. Their work—and the

careful coordination behind the scenes—made this year's event a standout celebration of emerging talent. [READ MORE](#)

ISYO and ISO Education News

The 2025-2026 season is “March-ing” right along for ISO education programs!

The ISYO Concerto Competition concert was held at First Presbyterian Church on 3/1 and was a great success! We had two incredible performances by competition winners Jeremy Gao on piano and Jeremiah LeVoy on clarinet. The annual Springfield Guild Scholarship auditions were held at Westminster Presbyterian on 3/7 with more than 20 ISYO musicians in grades 5-12 participating! The ISYO merchandise fundraiser ran from 2/28-3/20 and included new designs that were voted on by ISYO musicians. We look forward to finding out the total raised from merchandise sales as well as the ISYO Boosters fundraiser at Raising Cane's on 3/12.

We hope to see you all at the following upcoming ISYO events:

4/19 – ISYO Spring Showcase Concert with UIS Orchestra - All Ensembles,
Calvary Church, 501 Hazel Dell Rd, Springfield, IL 62712, 4:00-6:30 pm

4/26 – ISYO End of season potluck party, Washington Park, Springfield, 6:00-8:30 pm

Questions/Comments/Ideas for future issues: Contact Donald Tallman, Editor
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ILLINOIS SYMPHONY GUILD
OF SPRINGFIELD

The Guild Gazette

May 2026

Welcome to the May Issue of the Guild Gazette!

May is finally doing what May is supposed to do — warming up, greening up, and generally making you glad to be alive in Central Illinois. The Illinois Symphony Orchestra, for its part, has had a pretty spectacular spring as well. The season goes out not with a whisper but with the wide-open roar of Route 66 — and a world premiere to go with it. Add a record-shattering Gala, Gold Batons, scholarship recipients, and seven years of Jackie Mitra quietly changing lives, and you have an issue of the Guild Gazette that covers a season that gave us plenty to celebrate. Pour yourself something cold, find a spot in the sunshine, and read on.

[Learn more about the Symphony Guild: click here](#)

"Fabulous 'Finnish'" Brings the Season Home — With a Route 66 World Premiere

May 1 7:30 PM First United Methodist, Springfield

What does the open road sound like? On Friday, May 1, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra answers that question with the world premiere of *Reverie on the Mother Road* by Chicago composer Michelle Isaac — a six-minute overture bursting with freedom, percussion pyrotechnics, and even a tip of the hat to New Mexico's famous Musical Highway. Add Rachmaninoff's dazzling Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

with internationally acclaimed pianist Janice Carissa, and the triumphant sweep of Sibelius's Second Symphony, and you have a season finale that earns every word of its "Fabulous 'Finnish'" billing.

[Read the Full Story](#)

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)



A Night That Made History

The numbers tell part of the story: **\$220,000** raised in a single evening, shattering every previous record in ISO Gala history by more than

\$100,000. But the real story of the Night in Monte Carlo Gala — held April 18 at the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel — is the one written in the faces of donors who gave because they simply love what the Illinois Symphony Orchestra means to Central Illinois. Gala Chair Kristy Sullivan, Executive Director Trevor Orthmann, and Music Director Taichi Fukumura share the moments, the milestones, and the magic behind an unforgettable evening. [Read the full story](#)

Meet the ISO's 2026 Gold Baton Award Winners

They never sought the spotlight. They simply showed up — and then made sure others did too. At concerts, at board meetings, at a country club at sunset, at a bar on Toronto Road where no one expected to hear Beethoven. And always, always, with friends in tow. For Patricia and Randy Rushing, supporting the Illinois Symphony Orchestra has never



been a solitary act — it has been an ongoing invitation, extended generously and without fanfare, to anyone willing to experience something extraordinary. [Click Here](#)

[to Learn More about Gold Baton Award honorees](#) and how their love of live music became a lifetime of bringing others along for the ride.



Staff Spotlight: Jackie Mitra *Community Engagement Programs Manager*

She spent twenty years as a therapist working with youth and families. Then a phone call came, a youth symphony needed help, and Jackie Mitra said yes — just for a few months. That was seven

years ago. Today, as the ISO's Community Engagement Programs Manager, Jackie is the quiet force behind every young musician who found their place, every family who discovered the youth orchestra was for them too, and every barrier that no longer stands between a child and a violin. [Read Jackie's story →](#)



Host Families Needed for ISO Musicians

The Illinois Symphony Orchestra urgently needs Springfield-area host families for our upcoming final concert of the season. Even a short two- or three-night stay makes a real difference—and longtime hosts Steve and Joyce Nardulli can tell you just how meaningful it becomes. What started as offering a spare room has turned into years of shared meals, unexpected connections, and friendships that stretch across the globe. Hosting enriches both musician and family in ways no one anticipates.

Right now, your hospitality directly supports the Symphony by reducing hotel costs and ensuring our musicians feel welcomed and cared for during concert week. All it takes is a comfortable room and simple breakfast. What you give is small; what you gain is lasting.

If you can host—or even think you might—please reach out today.
Contact Jane Schurter at jschurter@ilsymphony.org.

Illinois Symphony Guild of Springfield Annual Meeting

Plan to join us for an enjoyable evening of good food and great music! The Illinois Symphony Guild of Springfield will hold its Annual Meeting on **Sunday, June 7**, at

Grant Conservatory in Springfield. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., with a picnic-style dinner catered by Nelson's beginning at 6:00 p.m.

The menu features grilled chicken, meatless lasagna, green beans, Caesar salad, and a surprise dessert. The business meeting will follow dinner, and entertainment will be provided by this year's ISO Scholarship recipients — a wonderful chance to hear the talented young musicians your support has helped inspire.



Tickets are \$40 per person, and non-Guild members are warmly welcome. We hope to see you there! [Purchase Tickets Here](#)

ISYO and ISO Education News

"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything." William Shakespeare's quote summed up this month of ISYO!

On April 19, the **ISYO Spring Showcase Concert** that included all ISYO classes, orchestras, the UIS String Academy, Trinity Lutheran strings, and UIS Orchestra was held at Calvary Church in Springfield. More than 250 musicians in Starter Strings through Symphony Orchestra wowed a packed house of more than 750 audience members with their talents and displayed the incredible progress they have made throughout the 2025-2026 season. We also had the bittersweet pleasure of honoring graduating ISYO seniors at this concert, including students who have been in the program for up to 11 years as well as a foreign exchange student who will be returning home soon. They will all be missed by their ISO/ISYO family!

The annual **ISYO end of season potluck** was held at Washington Park on April 26 with more than 150 musicians, staff, and family members in attendance to celebrate a successful season of learning and music-making together. Many thanks to the musicians, families, and staff who brought a lot of fun and a vast array of food that was enjoyed by all!

The **ISYO Practice-A-Thon fundraiser** concluded on April 12. Practice-A-Thon is ISYO's largest annual fundraiser and is an opportunity for students to raise funds for ISYO programs by requesting donations and pledges for their practice time. Donations and practice time reports will be submitted until May 1, and totals and prize winners will be reported soon!

ISYO auditions are underway for the 2026-2027 season and will continue through May 2 at the Grant Conservatory. The auditions are for musicians who will be new to ISYO or would like to move up to a higher ensemble in the upcoming season. Auditions will also be held in August.

Upcoming ISYO events:

5/1 - ISYO@ISO and Starter Strings at the Symphony – ISYO musicians attend the ISO concert at Springfield First United Methodist Church.

5/17 - Season Send-Off Concert with ISYO Orchestras & Chamber Groups, Sacred Heart-Griffin High School, 1200 W. Washington, Springfield, 4:00 pm

Your Voice Matters — Take Our Brief Survey!

The Guild Gazette has just been honored with a Gold Star Award, and we couldn't be more grateful — or more curious. What does this publication actually mean to you? Does a musician's story move you? Does a behind-the-scenes glimpse deepen your connection to the orchestra? We'd love to know.

We've created a short, nine-question survey that takes just one minute to complete, and your responses will help us understand the real value the Gazette brings to our community — far beyond open rates and click-throughs. Your voice will also help shape how we tell the ISO's story going forward. Please take a moment and let us hear from you.

[\[Take the Survey Here\]](#)

Questions/Comments/Ideas for future issues: Contact Donald Tallman, Editor
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