

LAURA WILLUMSEN

Since 1997, Laura Willumsen has served as the Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, the contemporary arts and education center in Pittsburgh's historic Mellon Park, with an annual budget of just under \$3 million. During her tenure, the Center's budget and programs have grown dramatically and have attracted national attention and funding. The Center's exhibitions of contemporary art were recently awarded funding from the prestigious Warhol Foundation for Contemporary Art in NY. Programs to support the work of professional artists have expanded: the Artist-In-Community Project was created in 2000 to provide networking, advocacy and professional development for artists working in community settings and in 2001, the Center became the state arts council's regional partner to establish and fund artist residencies in the community. The Center's studio arts classes reach close to 6,000 students annually, and its ceramics program has become the largest in the region. The Center has expanded service to underserved constituents through the region's largest scholarship program and the state's largest chapter of VSA arts, an international program providing arts programs for people with special needs. The Arts-in-Education programs have grown tenfold, now serving 5,000 public school elementary children and numerous early childcare organizations, using the arts to improve student achievement. The Center's Art Tales™ childcare program for elementary schools, established in 1999, were the first high-definition based education programs in the nation, and led to an innovative partnership with CineMuse, the nation's leading distributor of hi-def video, based at Tribeca Film Studios in NY. Through this partnership, the Center is leading the development of the CineMuse Network, a national network of cultural centers using hi-def to build audiences and attract new resources.

Prior to her position at the Center, Ms. Willumsen served as Executive Director of the Wheeling Symphony (1990-97), Manager of the Folger Consort, Producer of the Mount Vernon College Performing Arts Series, Producer of the D'Addario Guitar Series at Georgetown University, Assistant to the Director of Latin American Music Center at Catholic University and Manager of the Washington Sifonia. During her tenure in Wheeling, the number of annual concerts and the budget tripled. She co-produced the orchestra's first recording, founded the Wheeling Symphony Community Music School, established the "Music for the Mountain State" endowment fund to support a dramatic expansion of statewide touring, and helped secure the fund's first \$1 million gift.

Willumsen holds a Masters degree in Music Performance from Pennsylvania State University and a Bachelors degree in Performance from Catholic University. She is the recipient of full scholarships from Catholic University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Belgrano in Argentina, the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria and Wolf Trap/American University, among others. From 1980-85, Willumsen was a violinist with the U.S. Air Force

in Washington D.C., performing throughout the U.S., Europe, Asia and for events at the State Department and the White House. She was an active freelance violinist in D.C., where she taught violin privately and on the faculties of Trinity College and the D.C. Youth Orchestra.

A graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh XV, Willumsen was recently chosen as the first Denali Fellow from Pittsburgh. The Denali Initiative is a three-year national fellowship in social enterprise, created by Manchester Craftsman's Guild, in collaboration with the Harvard Business School and the Kaufmann Foundation in Kansas City. Willumsen was featured on the 1999 "Entrepreneur's Tour of America," a national tour celebrating entrepreneurs nationwide, and has been listed in the Post Gazette's "50 Top Cultural Power Brokers in Pittsburgh" for the past two years.

Willumsen is a member of the American Federation of Musicians. She has served on the boards of the YMCA (Wheeling), the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission/USA (D.C.), and currently serves on the board of the Afro-American Music Institute in Homewood, CineMuse, Inc., in NY, and on the advisory council of Duquesne University's Nonprofit Leadership Institute. She lives in Pittsburgh with her husband Kris, a theology professor at Wheeling Jesuit University, and her two sons, Adam and Noah.

Pittsburgh Center for the Arts

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