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## **American Idol's Newest Judge Kara DioGuardi to Face the Music**

### ***Grammy-Nominated Songwriter to Take Stage at Waldorf~Astoria to Benefit Columbus Citizens Foundation Scholarship Programs***

**New York, NY, October 3, 2008** – Just three months before she takes the hot seat as the newest American Idol judge, Grammy-nominated songwriter and producer **Kara DioGuardi** will put her own voice to the test.

Ms. DioGuardi will be the featured performer at the 2008 Columbus Celebration Gala Dinner at the Waldorf~Astoria Hotel on October 11, 2008. The fundraising event benefits scholarship programs and is part of New York City's annual Columbus Celebration, which culminates with the Columbus Day Parade. The parade will be held on Fifth Avenue on October 13 from 11:30 AM until 3:00 PM.

Ms. DioGuardi is the brilliantly talented songwriter and producer whose songs are on over 100 million records, eighty of which have racked up sales that made them multi-platinum albums. Her songs have been recorded by dozens of major-label artists, including **Christina Aguilera, Kelly Clarkson, Celine Dion, Pink, Avril Lavigne, Carlos Santana** and **Gwen Stefani**.

BMI's 2007 Pop Songwriter of the Year, Ms. DioGuardi and has been awarded ten BMI Pop Awards. She is also co-owner of ArtHouse Entertainment (<http://www.arthouseent.com/>), where she develops and mentors fellow hit writers, producers and artists.

Ms. DioGuardi was named the fourth American Idol judge on August 25.

Ms. DioGuardi last took the Waldorf~Astoria stage as a singer 25 years ago, when she performed at the 1983 Columbus Celebration Gala. Then 12-years-old, Ms. DioGuardi sang "Getting to Know You" and was embraced by the 1983 Grand Marshal, **Sophia Loren**.

Joining Ms. DioGuardi at the gala will be a host of celebrities and leaders of the Italian American community, including **Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani, Jr.**, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Grand Marshal of the 2008 Columbus Day Parade and now chairman of Alenia North America, Inc. Also on hand will be **Donald C. Winter**, Secretary of the Navy.

Attending the gala will be several past Columbus Day Parade Grand Marshals: restaurateur and celebrity chef **Lidia Bastianich** (2007), **Governor Mario Cuomo** (1986). Daytime Emmy Award-winning actor, and "daytime's leading lady" **Susan Lucci** (2000), currently appearing on "Dancing with the Stars," will be on hand, schedule permitting. Three-time Tony Award nominee **Ben Gazzara** will join in the celebration, as well.

This year's Columbus Celebration honorees are **Joseph J. Plumeri**, chairman and CEO of Willis Group Holdings Ltd., **Dr. Thomas P. Sculco**, Surgeon-in-Chief and Korein-Wilson Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Hospital for Special Surgery, and poet, translator and humanist **Joseph Tusiani**, the first American to win, in 1956, the prestigious Greenwood Prize of the Poetry Society of England.

The dinner is chaired by business news anchor and producer **Maria Bartiromo**.

The **Columbus Citizens Foundation** is a non-profit organization in New York City committed to fostering an appreciation of Italian-American heritage and achievement. The Foundation, through a broad range of philanthropic and cultural activities, provides opportunities for advancement to deserving Italian-American students through various scholarship and grant programs. The Foundation is providing scholarship assistance totaling \$2.2 million to 798 students this year. The Foundation organizes New York City's annual Columbus Celebration and Columbus Day Parade, which has celebrated Italian-American heritage on New York's Fifth Avenue since 1929. For more information, visit [www.columbuscitizensfd.org](http://www.columbuscitizensfd.org).

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Event:	Columbus Celebration Gala Dinner
Date:	Saturday, October 11, 2008
Location:	Waldorf~Astoria Hotel, 49 <sup>th</sup> St. and Park Ave.
Hours:	6:30 PM to approximately 11:00
Tickets:	\$1,000 by advanced sale: for information, call 212.249.9923

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