

## Position and Candidate Specification



Chicago Shakespeare Theater

### **Artistic Director**

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A Regional Tony Award recipient, Chicago Shakespeare Theater produces a bold and innovative year-round season—plays, musicals, world premieres, family productions, and theatrical presentations from around the globe—alongside education programming for students, teachers, and lifelong learners, and creative community engagement with artists and neighbors across the city.

Founded in 1986, the Theater has evolved into a world-class cultural institution, presenting as many as twenty productions and 650 performances annually, and has been honored with numerous national and international awards. Chicago Shakespeare is the city’s leading presenter of international work and has toured its own productions to five continents. The Theater is dedicated to welcoming the next generation of theatergoers: one in four audience members is under the age of eighteen.

Recognized as a national leader in the field, the Theater’s arts-in-literacy programs has supported the work in classrooms across the region for tens of thousands of students each year by bringing complex texts to life onstage and through a variety of professional learning opportunities for teachers. Now in its twelfth year, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks remains a key component of the Theater’s Community Practice – a year-round program rooted in engagement with neighborhoods and collaborations with local artists.

As a nonprofit organization, Chicago Shakespeare is committed to the values of service, ingenuity, and collaboration. At its core, it is about people: connecting audiences and artists, partnering with teachers and students, and sharing with friends and neighbors. It is in this spirit that the Theater upholds its commitment to be an increasingly inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible organization. The Theater strives to engage today’s artists and audiences in active and probing conversations with the texts of its namesake playwright, William Shakespeare.

Located on Chicago’s iconic Navy Pier, Chicago Shakespeare’s campus features three theater venues: the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater, a 500-seat performance space that evokes the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre; The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, one of the most dynamic and flexible theater venues in the world, with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850; and the Thoma Theater Upstairs, a 200-seat venue in which both the stage and seating configuration can be arranged in a variety of ways.

Onstage, in classrooms and neighborhoods across the city, and in venues around the world, Chicago Shakespeare is a multifaceted cultural hub—inviting all to share powerful stories that connect and inspire.

To learn more about Chicago Shakespeare Theater, visit [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com). To learn more about our commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, visit [www.chicagoshakes.com/ideatoaction](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/ideatoaction).

## FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Chicago Shakespeare’s current operating budget is \$17 million, approaching pre-pandemic levels.
- The Theater also has total assets of more than \$47 million, including an endowment of approximately \$15 million, as of December 31, 2022.
- Since 1999, Chicago Shakespeare Theater has been a central anchor of Navy Pier, the most popular tourist destination in the Midwest. The newly revitalized Navy Pier provides an attractive and useful public space for recreation and social interaction, fostering a sense of community within the city’s diverse population.
- The Theater employs 54 full-time and 83 part-time staff, and regularly employs the largest number of actors in Chicago.

The next Artistic Director (AD) of Chicago Shakespeare Theater will assume the artistic leadership of a theater with a rich history and many notable strengths – a distinctive identity in Chicago that springs from its foundational focus on Shakespeare and is further enhanced by its present-day programmatic breadth, which includes the presentation of international artists and the development of new work; a strong financial position; robust and renowned educational programs; superb and versatile facilities; and a commitment to serving its diverse community, including through engaging theatrical artists and building a staff and board who are representative of that community. Chicago Shakespeare is supported by a talented staff, loyal and generous donors, and a dedicated board of directors. At this historic moment with the dual transition of its founding Artistic Director and its longtime Executive Director, Chicago Shakespeare Theater seeks an ambitious artistic leader who will further raise its profile through the development and execution of an artistic vision that encompasses the Theater’s multi-faceted programming and supports the creation and presentation of world-class work that delights and engages audiences in Chicago and from around the world.

Working in partnership with the Executive Director (ED), the AD reports to the board of directors and will live within the Chicago Metropolitan area. Travel is an expected part of this role.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

A leader who centers the art and programs of the Theater while also valuing the people who make it possible, the Artistic Director has the following key responsibilities:

- Develop and execute an inspirational artistic vision for each season, engaging artists and audiences with the works of Shakespeare in conversation with a wide range of other programming.
- Partner with the ED to broaden and diversify Chicago Shakespeare’s audience, including by presenting productions of Shakespeare that are accessible and meaningful to a diverse range of audience members, including members of all communities of Chicago.
- Lead the Theater to break down any perceived barriers between artists and the plays of Shakespeare, enabling a diverse range of artists to use those plays to create their best art.
- Build and nurture strong relationships with a diverse community of local, national, and international artists.
- Build and lead creative teams, production teams, and casts that embrace diversity in the creation of great art.
- Foster a supportive environment where artists are welcomed and enabled to do their best work.
- Oversee the education department to deploy the Theater’s artistic assets to serve teachers, students, and other community partners.
- Collaborate with the ED, board, and staff on strategic planning.
- Serve as an ambassador for the Theater and engage with a range of interested parties – staff, board, artists, community partners, donors, civic leaders, peers, and the media – in both public and private settings.
- In collaboration with the ED, design and meet annual budgets that generate revenue to support operating and capital costs and build reserves.
- In partnership with the ED, director of human resources, managing director, Chicago Shakespeare’s community and culture team, IDEA committee of the board of directors, and IDEA consultants, guide the

Theater’s work in establishing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and practices; prioritize and sustain ongoing organization-wide IDEA training.

- Partner with the board, ED, and staff in building relationships with donors and increasing contributed income. Be an active participant in fundraising, personally engaging with individual donors to cultivate and secure major gifts.
- Maintain a consistent presence as an engaged member of the international, national, and local arts communities, the global Shakespeare community, and the Greater Chicago Metropolitan area.
- Lead through Chicago Shakespeare’s core values—service, ingenuity, and collaboration—and foster an environment that attracts and retains an engaged and talented staff and draws artists of the highest caliber, providing a safe and healthy work environment.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is seeking a bold, visionary, and collaborative individual to serve as its Artistic Director at this pivotal moment. The Artistic Director will be a leader committed to the high standards of excellence for which Chicago Shakespeare Theater is known, in the quality of performances on its stages, the audience experience from the moment they enter the theater's doors, the support and respect accorded visiting artists, and the seriousness of its community outreach and education programs.

Possessing a keen sense of artistic excellence, the AD will also have an appreciation for a broad spectrum of theatrical art. Adept at bringing artists together and fostering collaboration in new ways, the successful candidate will be dedicated to supporting artists in realizing their visions and creating their best work and will bring a strong set of relationships with creative partners. As one of Chicago Shakespeare's key ambassadors and fundraisers, the AD will articulate an artistic vision that inspires and attracts audiences, supporters, staff, and potential partners.

While the successful candidate does not have to be a theater director, it is essential that the Artistic Director be committed to presenting world-class productions of Shakespeare's work; to exploring how new theatrical work from around the globe can be in conversation with Shakespeare's plays; and to exploring Shakespeare's works as they relate to and give insight into our world of today and tomorrow.

## **IDEAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Artistic Leadership**

Artistic leadership, as evidenced by one or more of the following: a history of creating or producing impactful theatrical experiences, spanning new work and classics; a record of collaborating directly with artists and helping them do their best work; an extensive network of contacts and partners across artistic communities; and relevant experience with Shakespeare's canon through direction, performance, dramaturgy, design, production, or other discipline.

### **External Engagement**

Experience serving as an ambassador for an organization; demonstrated interest in cultivating and participating in meaningful and mutually beneficial community partnerships, such as high-quality education programs.

### **Commitment to Advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access**

Leadership in IDEA, including experience interacting empathetically with interested parties of varying views and backgrounds and pursuing measurable outcomes that advance an organization's IDEA goals. An understanding of anti-racism and other anti-bias principles and adoption of practices to address bias and inequity.

### **Building Resources and Relationships**

An enthusiasm for fundraising and a sincere interest in developing and cultivating relationships with current and potential donors and board members. Ability to attract artistic talent and a record of building strong relationships with artists throughout the field, ideally locally, nationally, and internationally.

### **Building and Leading Strong Teams**

Experience building, developing, and motivating a strong, unified team.

### **Working with a Board**

Experience developing and evaluating strategic priorities in collaboration with a board is helpful.

## **CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES**

### **Artistic Leadership**

To establish Chicago Shakespeare Theater as a destination for theatergoers around the world, through the quality of the work presented on stage in Chicago as well as through productions that tour nationally and internationally, the Artistic Director will bring artistic vision that inspires and attracts audiences, creative partners, and supporters. The Artistic Director will:

- Create and present world-class theater that extends the Theater's reach and impact, engaging existing and building new audiences
- Offer a platform for a wide range of great artists from all backgrounds to engage with and move the Theater's audiences
- Build upon Chicago Shakespeare's legacy of strong programming – Shakespeare, international productions, new work, and a nationally renowned education program
- In partnership with the creative producer, discover, create, and strategically realize opportunities to develop and produce new work that has potential to reach new audiences, unlock additional revenue, and enhance the reputation of the Theater
- Identify and leverage capabilities or synergies within the Theater or with peer organizations to promote healthy revenue and/or artistic collaboration

### **Leading An Organization Through Change**

In addition to navigating a time of societal and cultural changes that are affecting all performing arts organizations, Chicago Shakespeare is going through a time of significant internal change with this transition of its founding artistic director, which coincides closely with the departure of its long-serving executive director. A skillful communicator who can create excitement about Chicago Shakespeare, the Artistic Director, in partnership with the new Executive Director, will coalesce the Theater around a shared vision for the future while also carrying forward the Theater's relationships with its partners, including artists, community organizations, peers, and audiences. The AD will:

- Develop and convey compelling artistic visions that engage and energize audiences, staff, board members, and current and potential supporters
- Develop meaningful ways to engage the entire Theater, including the board
- Reinforce the Theater's purpose, culture, and values in partnership with the Executive Director and the senior leadership team
- Promote cross-organizational discussion to build alignment around the Theater's mission, vision, and direction
- Foster open communication and exchange of ideas across functions to achieve a common purpose

## **Collaboration, Influence and Engagement**

The Artistic Director must be capable of gaining the support of others and building relationships with a broad array of interested parties and partners, internally and externally. As Chicago Shakespeare's artistic leader and ambassador, the Artistic Director will:

- Proactively identify and cultivate future supporters and partners, including artists and co-producers, consistently nurturing those relationships
- Invest the time to engage with all important constituents and consider their views
- Collaborate effectively with the Executive Director, support and foster collaboration, and partnership across the Theater as well as with peer organizations

## **ADDITIONAL PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Cultural competency – the ability to interact effectively with people of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds
- Excellent judgment and creative problem-solving skills, including negotiation and conflict resolution skills
- An entrepreneurial spirit that is flexible and resilient

## **COMPENSATION**

- The estimated annual base salary range for this position is \$295,000 to \$325,000.
- Actual base salary will be dependent on the individual's skills, experience, and qualifications.

## **THE SEARCH PROCESS**

Chicago Shakespeare Theater has retained the leadership advisory firm Spencer Stuart to support it in the search for the next Artistic Director. If you wish to submit your own application materials or nominate a candidate for this position, please send an e-mail message with supporting materials to [ChicagoShakesAD@SpencerStuart.com](mailto:ChicagoShakesAD@SpencerStuart.com). Applicants should include a statement of interest.