

Position and Candidate Specification



Chicago Shakespeare Theater

Executive 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 support 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 Shakespeare's Globe and 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. To learn more about our commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, visit 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.

As the executive leader of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, the Executive Director (ED) will assume the leadership of a theater with a rich history and many notable strengths (programmatic breadth and a distinctive identity, including a commitment to presenting international artists and producing new work; a strong financial position; robust educational programs; superb and versatile facilities; and a commitment to serving a diverse community and audiences). Chicago Shakespeare is supported by a talented staff, loyal and generous donors and a committed, supportive board of directors. At this historic moment, with the dual transition of the Theater's founding Artistic Director and its longtime Executive Director, Chicago Shakespeare Theater seeks a leader who will be energized by this unique opportunity to partner with the next Artistic Director in charting an exciting course for the Theater's future that builds upon its strong foundation and history.

Working in partnership with the Artistic Director, the Executive Director reports to the board of directors and will live within the Chicago Metropolitan area.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

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

Strategic Leadership

- In partnership with the Artistic Director, board of directors and staff, provide organizational leadership to facilitate strategic planning and develop the overall vision and direction for Chicago Shakespeare Theater that builds on its breadth of programming and foundational commitment to Shakespeare.
- In collaboration with the board and members of the leadership team, develop and implement strategic and financial plans focused on supporting organizational goals and ensuring a strong, resilient business model.
- In partnership with the Artistic Director, broaden and diversify Chicago Shakespeare's audience, engaging audiences and community members of all ages throughout all of Chicago as well as national and international visitors to the city.

Resource Development and External Relations

- In coordination with the Artistic Director, partner closely with the board and staff to achieve contributed and earned revenue goals, including:
 - Developing and strengthening the board of directors.
 - Serving as one of the lead fundraisers for the Theater, personally engaging with individual donors to cultivate and secure major gifts and working closely with the development department on setting the Theater's overall fundraising strategy.
 - Developing strategies to tap into new sources of both contributed and earned revenue. This may include initiatives to develop new audiences and drive increased ticket sales and leveraging existing assets such as the Theater's facilities for revenue generation.
- Increase Chicago Shakespeare's visibility and reputation and garner more support for the Theater by maintaining a consistent presence as an engaged member of the international, national, and local arts communities, the global Shakespeare community and Chicago's public, corporate, government and philanthropic communities.

- Enhance Chicago Shakespeare’s engagement in the global theater community by representing the Theater at festivals and convenings, participating in collective lobbying efforts and fostering relationships with peer organizations across the city and around the world that may result in producing partnerships and resource-sharing.

Organizational Management

- Ensure marketing and sales, communications, fundraising, finance, and daily operations are effective, efficient, and guided by best practices.
- Maintain oversight of operations and budget to ensure prudent fiscal management that allows for the artistic and financial success of Chicago Shakespeare Theater in abiding by the rules and best practices for non-profit organizations.
- In partnership with the Artistic Director, director of human resources, managing director, Chicago Shakespeare’s community and culture team, IDEA committee of the board of directors and IDEA consultants, guide Chicago Shakespeare’s work in establishing equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility policies and practices. Prioritize and sustain ongoing organization-wide IDEA training.

Staff Development and Management

- Lead through Chicago Shakespeare’s core values of service, ingenuity and collaboration and foster a setting that attracts and retains an engaged, talented staff, providing a safe and healthy work environment.
- Retain, recruit and develop top talent. Build high-functioning, collaborative teams that reflect the demographics of the greater Chicago area and Chicago Shakespeare’s commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and access.
- Provide opportunities for professional growth and mentorship.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is seeking an entrepreneurial, collaborative, and strategic individual to serve as Executive Director at this pivotal moment. The Executive Director will be a creative, energetic, and empathetic leader who has demonstrated the ability to advance the aspirations of an organization and who possesses the leadership skills necessary to effectively guide an organization through a time of change. An individual who can attract resources and talent, the ED will also have a demonstrated record of building strong teams, instituting effective systems and enhancing financial resources. As one of Chicago Shakespeare's key ambassadors and fundraisers and executive leader, this individual must be a superb communicator and relationship builder who can effectively engage a range of interested parties such as staff, board, artists, community partners, donors, civic leaders, peers, and the media in both public and private settings.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Leadership Experience

10-plus years of experience in the performing arts, with at least five years of experience leading a performing arts organization or serving as a member of a senior leadership team.

Revenue Generation

Enthusiasm for and commitment to raising financial support for the Theater's work from contributed and earned revenue sources. An aptitude and eagerness for working with funding partners such as individuals, foundations, corporations and government and a creative, innovative approach to financially supporting the Theater's art and service.

Commitment to Advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access

Demonstrated 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 principles and adoption of practices to address bias and inequity.

Building and Leading Strong Teams

Experience hiring, developing, and motivating a strong, unified team. Experience working with a union is preferred.

Financial and Operational Acumen

Strong financial and operational acumen and experience overseeing multiple functions.

External Engagement

Experience serving as an ambassador for an organization, representing the Theater to a range of external interested parties, such as donors, local government and civic leaders, peer and partner organizations and the media. Demonstrated commitment to meaningful and mutually beneficial community partnerships, such as high-quality education programs.

Board Experience

Experience collaborating with a board, including developing and evaluating strategic priorities.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Acting Strategically

Recognizing the central importance of Shakespeare and the value of the breadth of the Theater's distinctive programming, the Executive Director will work in partnership with the Artistic Director, staff and board to chart a dynamic course for Chicago Shakespeare's future. Embodying the entrepreneurial spirit that is at the heart of the Theater, the successful candidate will:

- Propose changes to the strategy and/or direction while considering their implications across various parts of the business or functions
- Be grounded in best managerial practices and bring new thinking that challenges assumptions and conventional wisdom
- Contribute to the development of an organizational strategy and justify it with market insight
- Periodically reevaluate the current strategy; describe the trends and evolution of the external market or environment over a four-plus year horizon that may challenge the current strategy

Leading An Organization Through Change

Undaunted by change and able to model that confidence for others, the Executive Director, in partnership with the new Artistic Director, will coalesce the staff and board around a shared vision for Chicago Shakespeare's future while also continuing existing relationships and forging new relationships with peer organizations and community partners. The ED will:

- Communicate the vision and purpose of the Theater with enthusiasm and passion
- Orchestrate meetings, events and/or forums to engage the entire staff and board
- Enlist the leadership team to reinforce the Theater's purpose, culture, and values
- Foster open communication and exchange of ideas across functions, resolving different objectives to achieve a common purpose

Collaboration, Influence and Engagement

The Executive Director will develop a strong partnership with the new Artistic Director. They will model and nurture a culture of collaboration; engage the board and other key interested parties in a way that generates excitement and support for the work of the Theater and partner with peer organizations to strengthen the broader arts ecosystem. The ED will also:

- Promote collaboration and partnerships across the Theater and with peer organizations
- Facilitate discussions that enable staff and board members to collaborate with each other
- Orchestrate events for staff, board members and key interested parties to engage in dialogue and shape consensus
- Maintain, build, and leverage a network of relationships that are important to advancing the work and profile of Chicago Shakespeare Theater

ADDITIONAL PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Cultural competence—the ability to interact effectively with people of all cultures and socioeconomic 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 \$285,000 to \$315,000
- 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 Executive 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 ChicagoShakesED@SpencerStuart.com. Applicants should include a statement of interest.