



LOUISVILLE  
ORCHESTRA

**Executive Director**  
**The Louisville Orchestra**  
Louisville, Kentucky

The Louisville Orchestra (LO), among the most adventurous and innovative orchestras in the nation, seeks an inspiring, creative, and experienced leader to become its next Executive Director. Since its founding in 1937, the LO has been a cornerstone of the arts in Louisville and the region beyond, nationally and internationally applauded as a prolific commissioner of new works, and a beloved, pioneering cultural gem.

The past decade has ushered in a new era for the Orchestra, with a reinvigorated spirit and unhampered creativity that has paid many dividends, not least of which is an exceedingly loyal and inspired Louisville community. In 2014, the LO hired Music Director Teddy Abrams, whose artistic leadership has broken new ground and taken the Orchestra in myriad new directions.

Long respected for its excellence and always commended for its creativity, the Orchestra's programmatic innovations have expanded and accelerated under Abrams' vision, as has its reputation for producing the spectacular. The Louisville Orchestra of today takes the national spotlight with greater frequency than ever before and has earned unprecedented levels of attention and acclaim.

The current moment for the Louisville Orchestra presents the opportunity to activate an inflection point. The incoming leader will inherit an organization that has done the hardest and most vital work to survive and even thrive, having creatively improvised through a global pandemic and maintained an active season. After eight years of Abrams' musical leadership, experimentation and *the unexpected* are now inextricably woven into the LO's musical excellence and its brand. Amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Orchestra has also seen with fresh eyes its impact on the well-being of the public, and its potential to be of even greater service to its city and community. The Orchestra seeks an Executive Director to secure the organization's capacity to deliver on its mission—and its aspirations—consistently and sustainably into the future.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, working side by side with the Music Director, and in partnership with the staff and musicians, the next Executive Director will work to solidify and grow the legacy and impact of the Orchestra. They must fortify the organizational infrastructure, internal capacity, and resources to match the LO's ambition and its pace.

The ideal candidate should bring visionary and strategically creative thinking, outstanding organizational leadership and people management skills, and a taste for calculated risk. The next ED will be an exceptional communicator and listener with an unyielding commitment to the arts and to classical music in particular. They must be a forward-facing leader eager to plan and execute, but also a deft institutional steward, responsive to evolving circumstances and priorities.

The Louisville Orchestra has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this important recruitment. Please direct all inquiries and applications as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT THE LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA

The Louisville Orchestra is Kentucky's resident symphony orchestra, proudly anchored in and primarily serving the greater Louisville area of Kentucky and southern Indiana. A mid-sized orchestra, the LO has an operating budget of \$8.9M and annually employs over 150 artists, musicians, and staff, who support a performance season spanning 34 weeks. It is currently home to 57 full-time professional musicians and supported by 23 administrative staff, both full- and part- time.

The LO performs most of its classical and pops series concerts at Whitney Hall, its home concert venue at the [Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts](#), but stages many of its singular programs in other venues and neighborhoods throughout the metro area, including the [Old Forester Paristown Hall](#) (which the LO played a key role in creating). The LO is also the resident performing group for Louisville Ballet and Kentucky Opera.

A 34-member Board of Directors formally governs the organization; the group of prominent Louisville business, civic, philanthropic, and educational leaders meets 5 times annually.

The LO places emphasis on artistic quality, innovation, and immersive orchestral programming, education, and community outreach to bring audiences unique concert experiences and music that ranges from classical masterworks to new commissions by leading contemporary composers.

The Louisville Orchestra's mission is *to change lives throughout our entire community as only the Louisville Orchestra can – by promoting a culture of music through outstanding performances and education.*" Artist-driven civic leadership is playing an increasingly central role in this mission as the public service dimension of the LO's work gains momentum.

### ***History***

In 1937, led by Dann C. Byck Sr., a retail business giant and former Louisville school board chairman, the business community in Louisville came together to establish the city's orchestra. Maestro Robert Whitney was invited to conduct the newly established orchestra and arrived from Chicago that same year.

Only ten years into the LO's life, Maestro Whitney and the Mayor of Louisville Charles Farnsley hatched an adventurous plan to make the commissioning, performance, and recording of new works a centerpiece of the Orchestra's mission and brand. Called "the Louisville Plan," it was multi-purpose, with civic, social, and economic aims, intending not only to make the city an essential center for the arts, but attracting industry, new families, and broad prosperity.

Internationally recognized composers were commissioned to create new works for premiere by the Louisville Orchestra and an exciting series was launched. The classical music world took notice: wide critical acclaim and a resulting invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall followed on the premiere of a new commission from American composer William Schuman. As a result, the Louisville Orchestra became the first orchestra in the world to create its own record label: *First Edition Records*. With funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, the LO commissioned and recorded up to 52 new compositions annually, ultimately creating nearly 150 vinyl recordings of more than 450 works by living composers. They were released worldwide, by subscription, in

more than 48 countries. (A full-length feature documentary film, [\*Music Makes A City\*](#), chronicles this extraordinary achievement.) In 1981, the ensemble officially augmented to full-time status.

The attention garnered led to other opportunities: “A Festival of the Arts” at the White House; the Inter-American Music Festival at the Kennedy Center; “Great Orchestras of the World” at Carnegie Hall in 2001; and a tour to Mexico City. In 2001, the Louisville Orchestra received the Leonard Bernstein Award for Excellence in Educational Programming. Reflective of the Orchestra’s commitment to the music of the time, the LO has earned 19 awards from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) for adventurous programming of contemporary music.

### ***A Contemporary Orchestra***

Early in its life, the LO’s focus on commissioning new works and its proprietary record label truly created a new model for the American symphony orchestra. But as time wore on, America saw changes in the cultural, entertainment, and media landscapes that became increasingly unsettling for even a once-cutting edge model like Louisville’s.

At home, ongoing changes in the Greater Louisville business community paired with the recession of the early 2000s meant that significant challenges began to beleaguer the LO. The organization’s finances became severely stressed. The hardest moment came in 2010 when, after severe budget shortfalls, the LO filed for Chapter 11 reorganization and the organization went dark for a year. In 2013, the Orchestra reopened with a renewed sense of purpose, new leadership, and a refreshed musician roster and board membership. For the first time in decades, the LO balanced its annual budget—and has done so ever since—emblematic of the enduring resolve of the Orchestra’s people and its supporters, including patrons, donors, and local civic and business leaders. The city of Louisville is determined for its Orchestra to succeed in perpetuity.

Emerging from this challenging period, in 2014 the LO welcomed rising star Teddy Abrams as their new Music Director. Abrams saw the opportunity to “return to the roots” and crafted a revival of the Orchestra’s tradition of commissioning, performing, and recording new music, driving greater support for living composers. He also began shifting the Orchestra’s focus toward centering community-based performances and collaborations as an integral component of LO’s programming. The LO widened the variety of concert series offered to the community, including classical programs featuring world-renowned guest artists, lighter classical and pops performances, concerts with engaging themes in neighborhood locations throughout the city, and educational and family offerings.

### ***Education, Public Service, and the Pandemic***

The LO has a longstanding tradition of providing [educational programming](#) for the public, partnering with area schools and community organizations to reach an array of different neighborhoods and communities in Kentucky. For example, the LO’s *MakingMUSIC* program, which was founded in 1940, reaches more than 49,000 children and youth annually. It provides all 91 elementary schools in the local Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) district with small ensemble performances and a week-long series of concerts featuring the full orchestra, at no-cost, for fourth- and fifth-grade students, as well as varied opportunities for JCPS students, educators, and administrators to engage in participatory music education. Other longstanding programs include the [Young Artist Competition](#) (1942) and the LO Conducting School.

The last few years has seen a deepening of the LO's already-strong commitment to public engagement and working more intensely in the community. This trendline was clear even before COVID hit, but the pandemic has hastened it. In early 2020, LO programming shifted dramatically in response to the public health crisis: the Orchestra innovated to present a full 2020-2021 season of virtual performances and educational programming, demonstrating the organization's remarkable agility. Despite the considerable production challenges involved, the musicians and the staff rose to the occasion and the Orchestra's sound tightened and cohered over the season. As new ways of engaging musically with the community emerged and evolved, the LO began to consider the longer-term implications for virtual and non-virtual engagement.

Simultaneously, the pandemic laid bare the pain of entrenched social and racial inequities at a national scale and the LO [began to consider its role](#) in addressing it. Looking ahead, the LO is working toward a vision of itself as a catalyst for change by promoting understanding, bridging differences, and breaking down barriers through artist-driven civic leadership, all while promoting more equitable cultural health.

Today, the Orchestra is iterating on its concept of a modern orchestra as equal parts public service institution and presenting arts organization. The public good mission is being embodied in various ways:

In his artistic leadership, Abrams has attempted to equalize great music regardless of its origin or history, deliberately avoiding reifying stereotypes of “classical” music. This has become the basis for the LO’s education and engagement work, wherein the LO reflects and affirms the vibrancy of the greater Louisville community. The 2021-2022 season is the most diverse season to date, filled with an abundance of intellectually stimulating repertory—some new, some rediscovered—with female composers and composers of color represented. In addition, the newly created, Mellon-funded *Louisville Orchestra Creators Corps*, a three-year residency to advance the artistic output and careers of composers with backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in classical music, has the potential to become a model for how American orchestras can activate composers as “artist-leaders” by engaging them in building-up local communities.

The LO’s interest in surfacing the creative potential of young people, engaging their talents and imaginations, and showcasing the connectivity of diverse musical styles can be found in several programs. The [Landfill Orchestra](#) is an instrument-building program that teaches recycling and ecology along with science and crafts. The [Louisville Orchestra Rap School](#) is a residency-based program focused on social justice and community action, in partnership with local educators and artists, where youth write and create their own rap performances backed by the full orchestra. [Once Upon an Orchestra](#) is a collaboration with the Louisville Free Public Library to provide free ensemble concerts at each library branch during 2021-2022 to give more equitable access to performing arts opportunities for families.

### ***Collective Bargaining***

In 2021, the LO and its musicians ratified a new four-year master agreement that runs from June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2024. The musicians are represented by the LOMC (Louisville Orchestra Musicians Committee) who are empowered to negotiate and administer the contract on behalf of the musicians and the union, the Louisville Federation of Musicians, Local 11-637, AFM (American Federation of Musicians).

In response to the financial challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, the LO applied modest salary reductions across the board, including staff and musicians, which helped avoid significant layoffs. Musician salaries have since been reinstated.

### ***The Louisville Community***

Located in the heart of Louisville, the LO is a grounding force for the arts and culture ecosystem, setting the example for cutting edge programming and community engagement. As the largest city in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Louisville is situated on the mile-wide Ohio River and is influenced by both Southern and Midwestern culture. With a population of about 1.3 million, the Louisville metropolitan area has exceptionally diverse arts attractions (with distinguished theater, ballet, opera and a wide range of museum offerings); multiple collegiate and professional sports opportunities (including the Kentucky Derby, professional baseball, and men's and women's soccer teams); a rapidly growing tourist industry based on more than a dozen "Urban Bourbon" distilleries and bars; a nationally-acclaimed restaurant scene; the recently-opened Waterfront Botanical Gardens; and a number of stunning parks. The open green spaces of particular note include the expanding Louisville Waterfront Park along the Ohio River, a series of interior neighborhood parks designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, and one of the nation's largest new metropolitan parks projects—an outer ring of connected parks known as the Parklands of Floyds Fork, including a section of a 110-mile paved walking/cycling Louisville Loop. Louisville is also home to a number of Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies, hosting the headquarters of Brown-Forman, Humana, UPS Airlines, LifePoint Health (formerly Kindred Healthcare), Papa John's, GE Appliances, *Yum!* restaurant corporation, and more.

### ***Current Leadership***

The next Executive Director will succeed Graham Parker, who joined the organization as the Interim Executive Director in October 2021. Parker comes into this role at the LO after leading Decca Records USA, the classical music company of Universal Music Group. Parker previously served in leadership at WQXR Radio, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic.

### ***Music Director Teddy Abrams***

An unusually versatile musician, Abrams is a widely-acclaimed, energetic advocate for the power of music. He has fostered interdisciplinary collaborations with organizations including the Louisville Ballet, the Center for Interfaith Relations, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Speed Art Museum, and the Folger Shakespeare Library. His rap-opera, *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*, premiered in 2017, celebrating Louisville's hometown hero with an all-star cast that included Rhiannon Giddens and Jubilant Sykes. Abrams' work with the Louisville Orchestra has been profiled on CBS News Sunday Morning, NPR, and in The Wall Street Journal. He has become an integrated fixture in the Louisville community, forging deep relationships with civic, philanthropic, and business leaders who are important to the Orchestra. He was named Musical America's [Conductor of the Year](#) for 2022. Abrams' contract with the LO runs through 2025.

## **THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Executive Director serves as chief executive of the Louisville Orchestra and together with the Music Director and the Board of Directors is responsible for its success. Together, they work to set an ambitious and forward-facing vision for the Orchestra and chart a path toward its realization; advance the Orchestra's

evolving mission; fortify its standing in the greater Louisville region and within the orchestral landscape; ensure the Orchestra's fiscal stability; and engage the entire community of stakeholders—patrons, donors, musicians, staff, and others—to co-create the Louisville Orchestra experience and catalyze the institution's forward momentum.

The Executive Director will be a compelling ambassador and organizational leader, accountable for managing and cultivating a team of senior leaders, ensuring all departments are aligned and collaborating to achieve results. At present, the Executive Director's seven direct reports include the Chief Financial Officer, Director of Learning & Community, Director of Artistic Operations, Director of Marketing, Director of Patron Services, the Chief Development Officer, and an Executive Administrator.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The next Executive Director will be well positioned to take advantage of the ongoing opportunities presented by the dynamic conditions of 2022, which demand continuous adaptation; build on the accomplishments of the past decade; and tackle the challenges outlined below.

Working closely with all the Orchestra's stakeholders, the next Executive Director will address the following opportunities and challenges:

### ***Refine and Execute a Vision for the Orchestra***

The LO's core mission is to change lives by promoting a culture of music through outstanding performances and education. As described in the pages above, the Orchestra's identity has been shifting, such that the public service mission is becoming coequal to its mission of musical excellence. The next Executive Director will collaborate deeply with Music Director Teddy Abrams and the broader LO community to refine and iterate upon this vision of ***artist-driven civic leadership***. There is a critical opportunity here: if done right, the Louisville Orchestra can become a template for the U.S. American Orchestra, ever fighting to fulfill their potential, remaining relevant and essential to their beloved and increasingly diverse communities.

The Executive Director will work with the Music Director, senior leadership team, staff, and board to identify opportunities to design and implement brand new programs, nurture nascent ones, drive promising program changes, and pursue innovations while not straying from the LO's mission. They will work closely with Abrams to be at once proactive, planful, inventive, and responsive to the field.

The LO's most recent strategic plan was created in 2017 and outlined organizational goals through 2022; when the pandemic hit in 2020, the planned course became far less relevant, as the Orchestra focused its attention on unanticipated adaptations. The next Executive Director will need to lead the organization through strategic planning work that supports and guides the LO's ongoing self-realization in practical and achievable ways.

### ***Fortify the Organizational Infrastructure and Internal Capacity to Sustainably Deliver on the Mission***

In this next chapter, the Orchestra is positioned to make further advances, anchoring the innovations of the past two years and grounding its place as an essential institution for both the region and among orchestras worldwide. But the current internal capacity of the organization is not appropriately matched to fuel the pace

of the LO's endlessly innovative programming. The opportunity to establish this new orchestral paradigm as a sustainable one has great implications and should be high on the list of priorities for the incoming leader.

The incoming ED should assess the current operations infrastructure and find opportunities for investment, whether in new systems, such as an updated donor and patron management database, and other technology-supported processes to reduce the clerical administrative burdens and keep the organization agile and responsive.

#### ***Steward the Orchestra's Finances and Drive Resource Expansion***

The Orchestra's FY2021-2022 is \$8.9M; for FY2022-2023, it is projected to be \$9.5M. Roughly speaking and pre-pandemic, 30 percent of revenue is earned (ticket sales, work with the opera and ballet); 10 percent from investment income; and 60 percent is contributed. Generous donors are central to the Orchestra's financial vitality. A top contributor to the Louisville Orchestra is the Association of the Louisville Orchestra ([ALO](#)), a separate 501c3 entity that raises money annually for the LO.

Cognizant of the limitations of traditional event-based ticket revenue, the next Executive Director must seek to bolster and diversify revenue sources—with a combination of creative, out-of-the-box thinking and strong business sense—and pursue a more robust and sustainable business model for the Orchestra. Central to this, of course, will be the expansion of the fundraising base. The LO has averaged \$4.5M contributed revenue over the last 5 years.

Revenue from endowment will play an increasingly important role in the Orchestra's long-term outlook. At present, the orchestra has a somewhat unconventional arrangement of three different endowments, each established for unique purposes at unique times. The Louisville Philharmonic Society has assets of ~\$1.6M; the Community Foundation of Louisville has assets of ~\$12M; and the Louisville Orchestra Endowment Inc., with current assets of ~\$2.5M. The LO is in the early stages of embarking on a three-year capital campaign to build upon these endowment assets. Through this campaign and other endeavors, there is opportunity for greater patron engagement and long-term major donor cultivation. The LO is currently actively sourcing an external partner to support this launch.

The next Executive Director will be responsible for maintaining the overall fiscal health of the Orchestra, working closely with the Chief Financial Officer to ensure funds are managed, invested, allocated, and dispersed wisely, and reporting regularly to the Board on all financial matters.

#### ***Expand the LO's Vitality and Reach into the Community***

Community sits at the heart the LO's enduring and evolving missions. The Orchestra's relationships with external audiences and constituencies, including concertgoers and patrons, potential philanthropic partners, and other arts organizations and civic institutions in the region, are of critical importance. Deep partnerships and relationships with key members of the Louisville civic, business, educational, and social communities will be important to maintain as the LO's programs seek to further magnify their reach and impact. The Executive Director plays a key role, as an important external representative of the Orchestra, in tending to these critical relationships.

The LO has potential to expand its musical and public service footprint beyond the Greater Louisville Metro area; it aspires to become a regional cultural resource, serving as a unifying voice for Kentucky and engaging all corners of its rich fabric. Funding is currently being sought and secured from private philanthropic, industry, and government sources for an annual statewide Kentucky Tour, by which the LO will be able to directly engage the whole state, especially those rural communities traditionally underserved by major performing arts organizations.

As the lead ambassador to all external parties, the Executive Director must communicate effectively and dynamically, receive input and feedback with grace, inspire confidence, and tirelessly champion the orchestra. This leader will become a central figure in the Greater Louisville community, working to strengthen the Orchestra's presence in the local arts community, its bigger role in the creative economy, and its impact as a civic leader. The next ED should also consider strategic partnerships with peer institutions and major players in the civic sector across the region.

#### ***Advance the Orchestra's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Vision***

The LO has engaged much more deeply with its own learnings around equity, diversity, and inclusion in the past two years. The organization's [statement on racial equity](#) speaks to the unique role music has to play in disrupting injustice and providing healing for communities. The Orchestra's equity, diversity, and inclusion vision includes ambitions to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of its board and artistic and administrative staffs, to increase LO engagement with underserved neighborhoods within the Louisville Metro area, and to increase LO engagement with members of rural communities across the larger Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Orchestra has recently secured funding from The Catalyst Fund Incubator Program, administered through the League of American Orchestras, to bring in EDI expertise for a three-year span to advance this work. The next Executive Director must support the programmatic musical vision that centers diversity of canon and artists, as well as every other dimension of the organization's evolving EDI aspirations.

#### ***Effectively Support, Manage, and Empower Staff, Musicians, and Board***

The "people power" behind the LO is lean. All units are working at their maximum and it is not uncommon for siloes to form. As a result, a strong internal communications function will be incredibly important. The next Executive Director will consider the ways in which intra-institutional decisions and initiatives are communicated, with particular attention paid to increasing transparency and more fully equipping staff to execute in support of commonly established and understood goals.

The people who work at The LO are a dedicated and talented group. They offer more of themselves than is typical. The next Executive Director will honor the contributions of every member of the LO community and promote a positive and supportive working environment. They should support the senior leadership team as they optimize their individual operational areas, delegating effectively and ensuring a cohesively knit set of departments. They will be a unifying force, strategically convening groups, facilitating meaningful conversation, and guiding consensus-building processes, helping to navigate relations between musicians, staff, board, donors, and other key stakeholders. The Executive Director will prioritize recruiting, supporting, retaining, and developing the talented staff who enable the LO to do its best work. This includes close engagement with the Louisville Orchestra Musicians Committee, to maintain a strong and positive working relationship.

The Board is a generous and engaged group of individuals, many of whom have been long-time supporters of the LO, purposeful about their stewardship of the organization, and committed to its vibrancy—and the vibrancy of the community it serves. The next ED will build on this strong foundation and will call upon their talents and resources to ensure success. The ED must maintain a strong partnership with Board members, connecting with them individually and as a group, to ensure sustained cultivation and support to the ED, while taking an active role in planning for the future, recruiting, and developing new leaders.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

In the next Executive Director, the LO seeks a leader with meaningful stature in the arts, proven leadership skills, strong communication skills, demonstrated ability to lead, and a strategic mind to guide the continuous improvement of the institution. The new Executive Director will be a bold leader who is passionate about the LO's mission, committed to its longstanding standards of excellence, and motivated by its future potential.

The Executive Director must be a highly credible representative of the Orchestra among diverse audiences. While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and possess these personal characteristics, attributes, and values:

- A sincere professional and personal commitment to the mission and values of the Orchestra
- Significant evidence of leadership and management success in an organization of similar scope, scale, and complexity
- Creativity and out-of-the-box thinking
- Passion for and proven skills in donor cultivation and fundraising
- Experience managing multiple constituencies, inspiring and coalescing diverse stakeholders toward a common goal
- Proven capacity in effectively leading a senior team; a record of recruiting and retaining diverse talent at all levels; exceptional skill for inspiring, motivating, developing, and empowering staff
- Experience engaging with a board of directors or other governing body
- Demonstrated change management skills
- The capacity to work respectfully and collectively on challenging issues large and small
- A track record of building strong external relationships
- Ability to set priorities and make hard decisions
- Strong business and financial management skills, and, ideally, experience successfully leading a financially lean institution
- Experience building new revenue streams, whether earned or contributed
- A strong understanding of the classical music industry, presenting organizations, and American symphony orchestras in particular, including their history, current trajectory, mission, and possibilities for the future
- The depth of artistic and musical knowledge required to become a leader and collaborator in the cultural community and a true partner to the musicians and Music Director

- A principled commitment to social justice and the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and a track record of turning those core values into action
- The sound judgment of a highly ethical and honest individual
- Clear and persuasive communication style
- A warm, relational, and healing interpersonal approach
- Drive, stamina, and endurance

#### **APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES**

The Louisville Orchestra has retained national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications can be sent electronically, in confidence, to the following:

**Ben Tobin, Partner**  
**Chloe Kanas, Managing Associate**  
**Isaacson, Miller**  
[www.imsearch.com/8403](http://www.imsearch.com/8403)

*It is the policy of the Louisville Orchestra to provide equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age (forty and over), national origin, disability (as defined by applicable law), veteran status, or any other status of characteristic protected by applicable law.*