



ballet memphis

Executive Director | Position Announcement



About Ballet Memphis

<https://balletmemphis.org/>

Founded in 1986 with the goal of establishing a ballet company reflective of the greater Memphis community, Ballet Memphis' mission is to reveal and celebrate the human spirit through dance and movement. Now in its 38th season, Ballet Memphis operates along four programmatic pillars: the professional dance company, the Ballet Memphis School, robust year-round Pilates and wellness offerings for adults, and a growing body of community impact work.

Ballet Memphis' professional company performs well-known classical ballets as well as new works prioritizing a diversity of voices, styles, stories and creators that represent the richness of the human experience. It connects with audiences through original interpretations of narrative ballets that are accessible and tailored to the company's size and resources, and has built an acclaimed original repertoire that speaks of the cultural significance of the area. The company, which has toured to prestigious stages such as The Joyce Theater and the Kennedy Center, stages a full season of classical and modern dance including performances at Memphis' historic Orpheum Theater. In 2017, Ballet Memphis moved into a custom-built, award-winning facility in a vibrant arts district, featuring a large-scale performance studio, classrooms, Pilates studio, and costume shop, as well as community meeting spaces and exceptional rental opportunities for events of all sizes.

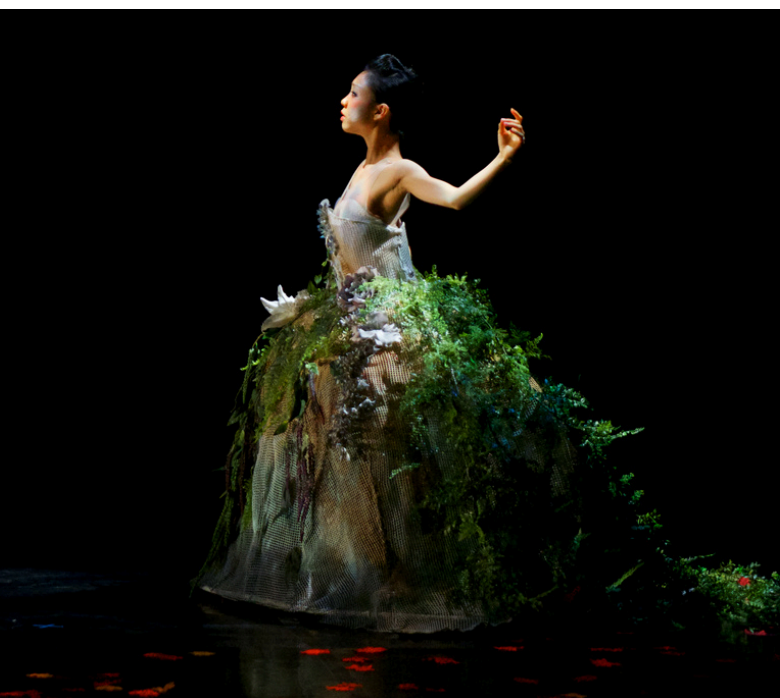


Ballet Memphis School, the organization's longest-standing program, continues to serve as the Mid-South's premier education and training facility for dancers ages 3-18 throughout the school year. It offers personalized ballet instruction tailored to each student's abilities and artistic development. The most advanced students can audition for and join Youth Ballet Memphis, which provides opportunities to develop and showcase their technique and artistry through professional-level performances. Ballet Memphis School also hosts summer camps and intensives each year.

Ballet Memphis offers Pilates and wellness classes for adults of all ages and abilities. In addition to private and semi-private Pilates instruction, there are group mat and equipment classes for all levels. Ballet Memphis is also a Licensed Training Center for training and certifying new Pilates instructors. Ballet Memphis also offers adult classes in classical ballet and modern dance, as well as an adult summer intensive.

Community impact offerings include Inclusive Dance for children and young adults with developmental disabilities, a Dance for Parkinson's class, and dance and movement classes taught in Spanish and English for bilingual youth. Ballet Memphis also partners with other local nonprofits such as Young Actors Guild, Stax Music Academy and Memphis River Parks.

Ballet Memphis embraces creativity and innovation, continuously exploring new works and ideas. It remains a welcoming space that encourages artistic experimentation and connection, inspiring audiences and dancers alike.





Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) of Ballet Memphis will serve as a co-leader of the organization alongside the Artistic Director, sharing responsibility for overall strategic direction, financial sustainability, and organizational growth. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED will be a visible advocate and spokesperson, driving community engagement and fostering strong partnerships. This role requires a dynamic, visionary leader with a passion for the arts, exceptional fundraising and business acumen, and the ability to collaborate effectively to balance artistic and operational priorities.

In close partnership with Artistic Director Steven McMahon, the ED will implement Ballet Memphis's artistic vision, ensuring alignment with strategic and financial goals. Together, they will play a pivotal role in sustaining and expanding Ballet Memphis's legacy as a premier arts institution, renowned for its innovative repertoire and long-held commitment to reflecting the diverse Memphis community. The ED will lead efforts to enhance financial sustainability, grow the donor base, and maximize earned revenue opportunities, while fostering an inclusive and inspiring organizational culture. With the Artistic Director, the ED will be instrumental in nurturing Ballet Memphis' artistic and educational pillars: a full season of classical and modern dance, robust community programs, and a ballet school known for its individualized approach to training.

This is a unique opportunity to lead a beloved cultural institution, leveraging its strong foundation to envision and execute a future of expanded community impact, national prominence, and lasting financial stability. If you are a strategic thinker, an adept fundraiser, an advocate for the arts, and a leader driven to inspire and connect, we invite you to bring your expertise and passion to Ballet Memphis.

Key Responsibilities

- **Strategic Vision:** Develop and implement long-term strategic plans, balancing artistic vision with operational needs and positioning the organization for continued growth.
- **Fundraising & Donor Relations:** Lead the development and execution of a comprehensive fundraising strategy, including growing the donor pipeline, cultivating and soliciting major gifts, securing grants from foundations and corporate sponsors, implementing a moves management system, and growing the endowment to meet both general operating and special project funding needs.
- **Financial Leadership:** Oversee budgeting, financial planning, and revenue generation, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- **Board Development:** Strengthen board engagement and recruitment, follow governance best practices, and foster active participation in fundraising.
- **Community Engagement:** Act as the public face of Ballet Memphis, building relationships with local and regional stakeholders while sharing Ballet Memphis' vision and story.
- **Team & Culture Management:** Foster a cohesive, communicative internal culture, bridging any gaps between staff, dancers, and leadership.
- **Artistic Partnership:** Collaborate closely with the Artistic Director to support creative initiatives while ensuring financial viability.

Reporting Relationships: Both the Executive and Artistic Directors report to the Board of Directors. The ED will lead a team that includes the Chief Administrative Officer, Director of Communications, Development Officer, Pilates + Wellness Director and Community Programs Manager.



Qualifications

- Demonstrated success in fundraising, donor cultivation, and endowment campaigns.
- Proven experience in executive leadership within the arts or nonprofit sectors.
- Strong financial acumen and business management expertise.
- Exceptional leadership, relationship-building, and communication skills.
- Passion for the arts, with an understanding or appreciation of ballet.
- Experience with board governance and nonprofit best practices.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Preferred Qualifications

- Connection to Memphis or enthusiasm for embracing the city's culture.
- Experience navigating organizational financial challenges.
- Understanding of the unique demands of the arts work culture.
- Background in arts education or performance.



Key Colleagues



Steven McMahon, Artistic Director

Steven was born in Glasgow, Scotland, where he began his dance training at The Dance School of Scotland. In 2001, Steven moved to the United States to continue his studies at the Ailey School in New York City, where he graduated with honors. In 2004, Steven joined Ballet Memphis as a company dancer and, for the next 13 seasons, danced in much of the company's original repertoire by noted choreographers such as Julia Adam, Trey McIntyre, Mark Godden, Matthew Neenan, and Gabrielle Lamb.

In 2005, Steven created his first work, "What Your Soul Sings," for the dancer-produced program Interiorworks. Soon after, Ballet Memphis's Founding Artistic Director, Dorothy Gunther Pugh, named him Choreographic Associate. Since then, Steven has created over 40 original works that show a great range in scale and style. Major full-length productions for Ballet Memphis include Dracula, Peter Pan, Cinderella, Romeo and Juliet, and the Wizard of Oz. Steven has continued to expand his repertoire with works such as A Rare and Gentle Thing, which is danced to the music of icon Dolly Parton, and This Form Shall Rest by bluegrass/folk musician Rhiannon Giddens. Steven has collaborated with several Memphis-based artists and musicians, including visual artist Erin Harmon (Flyway), Memphis record Label Unapologetic and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra for his dance film Out of the Blue; his work Confluence was performed at the Joyce Theater in NYC; his works I AM and Being Here with Other People have been seen at the Spring to Dance Festival in St Louis.

Steven received the Young Scots Achiever Award in 2001. He graduated from the New Memphis Leadership and Development Institute and is a fellow of National Arts Strategies Senior Leadership and the Salzburg Global Seminars Young Cultural Innovators program. Steven is a member of Dance Memphis, which promotes dance in his adopted city. In 2019, he was named Artistic Director of Ballet Memphis, a position he still holds today.



Shelley Shanaman, Board Chair and Community Volunteer

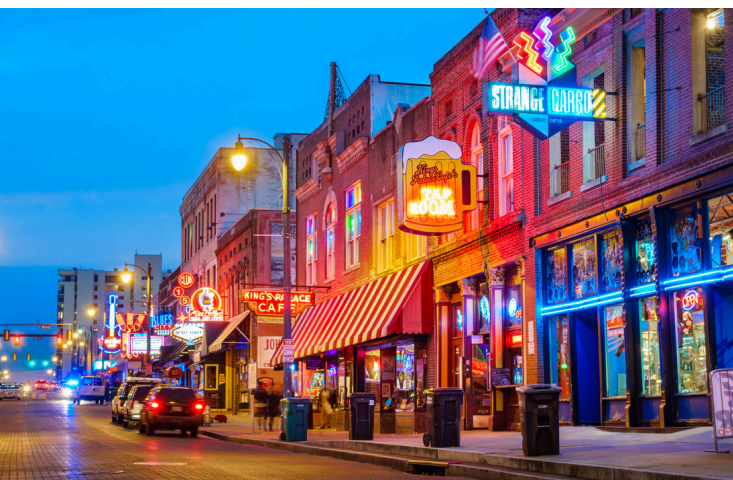
Shelley Shanaman, Chair of the Board of Directors of Ballet Memphis, first found Ballet Memphis in 2007 when looking to enroll her then three-year-old daughter in her first ballet class. Many hours spent watching class and waiting for her daughter at the studio unearthed a previously unknown love of dance. She joined the Ballet Memphis Board in 2017 as the first school parent to be a member, and was named chair in 2023. Before moving to Memphis, Shelley worked in marketing consulting and brand management. In Memphis, she has been active at her children's schools and has tutored second-graders in reading for several years. Additionally, she serves on the board of Iris Collective, a music and community-based organization also in Memphis. She has a BA in Economics from Williams College and received her MBA from Cornell University. Shelley and her husband Brett have two children and live in Germantown, TN with many pets.

About Memphis

Overlooking the Mississippi River, Memphis is a city with soul, shaped by its deep musical roots, rich history, and thriving arts scene. As the birthplace of blues, soul, and rock 'n' roll, it pulses with the energy of legends like B.B. King, Elvis Presley, and Otis Redding. Beale Street remains the heart of its live music culture, while Sun Studio and the Stax Museum honor the city's lasting influence on American music. Beyond its musical legacy, the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel stands as a powerful tribute to the city's role in the fight for justice and equality, and Shelby Farms Park connects the city as the largest urban park in the U.S. and one of the largest in the world, with miles of trails, lakes, and more.

Memphis' creative spirit extends beyond music into a flourishing arts scene. The Dixon Gallery and Gardens and the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art—soon to be replaced by the new world-class Memphis Arts Museum overlooking the Mississippi—showcase impressive collections spanning classical to contemporary works. Crosstown Arts and the Edge District fuel the city's modern creative movement, supporting local artists and experimental projects. The Orpheum Theatre hosts Broadway productions and concerts, while Playhouse on the Square and Theater Memphis are hubs for dynamic local theater. The arts district where Ballet Memphis lives also boasts Hattiloo Theater, the only freestanding black repertory theatre in the South, as well as the Overton Shell, one of the nation's last original amphitheaters and home of Elvis' first paid concert. Ballet Memphis brings both classical and contemporary ballet to the city, while the Memphis Symphony Orchestra delivers world-class performances that reflect the city's diverse musical heritage. The Metal Museum—the only institution of its kind in the U.S.—celebrates metalwork as both craft and fine art.

The city is home to Rhodes College and the University of Memphis as well as St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. FedEx, AutoZone and International Paper are all headquartered in Memphis. Paired with its legendary barbecue, a rising culinary scene, and the grit and passion of the Memphis Grizzlies, the city is a place where history, creativity, and culture converge, making it one of the most unique destinations in the South.



Compensation

Compensation for the Executive Director is \$140,000 to \$160,000 annually based on experience and includes an excellent package of employee benefits.

To Apply

Interested applicants should send a resume and a statement of interest to Jonathan McIntosh, Partner and Hannah GoslingGoldsmith, Recruiter with ThinkingAhead Executive Search: jmcintosh@thinkingahead.com; hgoslinggoldsmith@thinkingahead.com.

Contact Information

Jonathan McIntosh
Partner, ThinkingAhead Executive Search
615-391-2650
jmcintosh@thinkingahead.com

Hannah GoslingGoldsmith
Recruiter, ThinkingAhead Executive Search
615-391-2598
hgoslinggoldsmith@thinkingahead.com

Ballet Memphis works to sustain an environment that is consciously inclusive of all races, ages, religions, sexual identities, gender expressions, and abilities. We renounce racism as well as any other system or structure that perpetuates exclusion and causes harm. Our excellence derives from our diversity and we commit to continuously challenging ourselves as well as old ideas and outdated norms that hinder the full celebration of our collective humanity.

ThinkingAhead Executive Search is an Equal Opportunity Employer, committed to a work environment that supports, inspires and respects all individuals. Personnel processes are merit-based and applied without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, disability, national or ethnic ancestry, military service status, citizenship, or other protected characteristic. This applies to every aspect of employment including hiring, training, advancement and termination. The firm is committed to creating a just culture of diversity, equity and inclusion by practicing, within the company and the marketplace we serve, intentional strategies that serve marginalized individuals and groups.

