



INDIANAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Chief Operating Officer

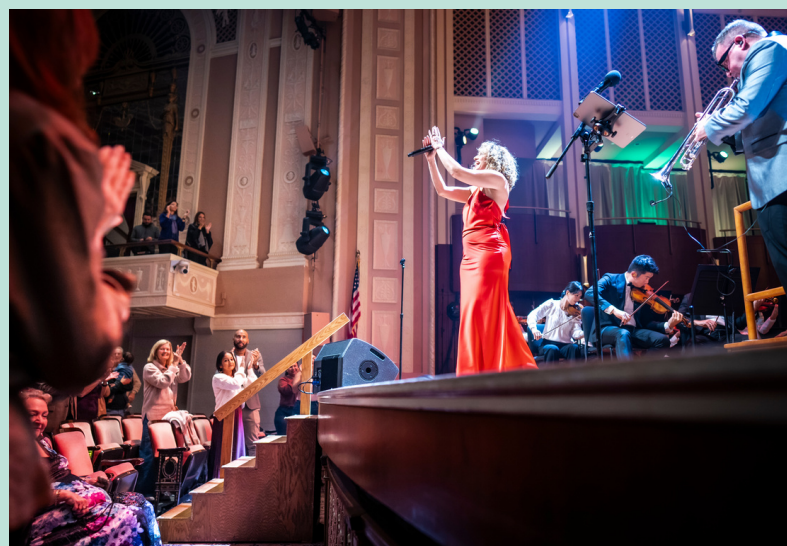
Position Announcement

About The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (ISO) stands as a cultural cornerstone in the Midwest, celebrated for its artistic excellence, innovative programming, and deep community impact. From classical masterworks to pops, film scores, and contemporary collaborations, the ISO's versatility and ambition have earned it national recognition. Led by renowned Music Director Jun Märkl, the orchestra performs with a level of musicianship that consistently moves and inspires diverse audiences. The ISO's home, the historic Hilbert Circle Theatre on Monument Circle, serves as a vibrant gathering place in the heart of downtown Indianapolis.

What sets the ISO apart is its commitment to education and community engagement. Signature initiatives like the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra and Discovery Concerts introduce thousands of students to the power of symphonic music each year, often providing a first encounter with live orchestral performance. Through strategic partnerships with schools, community organizations, and fellow arts institutions, the ISO helps foster a lifelong love of music and ensures that the arts remain accessible and relevant to people of all ages and backgrounds.

As Indiana's largest non-profit performing arts organization, the ISO operates with a spirit of innovation and civic responsibility. It continues to evolve in response to its growing and dynamic community, embracing both tradition and experimentation. Now preparing to launch a multimillion-dollar comprehensive campaign—including transformative renovations of the Hilbert Circle Theatre—the ISO is poised for an exciting new chapter. Its forward-thinking leadership, collaborative culture, and commitment to delivering transformative experiences make it a vital force in the region's cultural and economic life, and an inspiring environment for a strategic and mission-driven Chief Operating Officer to help shape what's next.





Position Summary



The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra seeks an inspiring and strategic Chief Operating Officer to join its Executive Leadership Team at a pivotal moment in the organization's evolution. Reporting to and serving as a trusted partner to CEO James Johnson, the COO will lead key areas of the Symphony's operations—including Venue Operations, Education and Community Engagement, Human Resources, and IT—with a strong focus on operational excellence, innovation, and impact.

This role calls for a visionary leader who unites diverse teams around a shared purpose, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and transparency. The COO will align operational strategy with the Symphony's bold artistic mission, ensuring that all aspects of the organization work cohesively to advance its impact, from the concert hall to the classroom to the community.

Working closely with fellow Executive Team members, the COO will drive the successful execution of the ISO's strategic plan and ensure the infrastructure supports a vibrant, growing institution. This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of one of the nation's leading orchestras while enriching the cultural and civic life of Indianapolis and beyond.





Key Responsibilities

- Partner with the CEO and CFO to support revenue growth, forecasting, and operational effectiveness, ensuring that infrastructure and systems align with the organization's long-term strategic goals.
- Oversee front-of-house operations, event logistics, facility maintenance, repairs, and capital improvements to ensure an exceptional audience experience and strong alignment between venue operations and the Symphony's artistic and community goals.
- Develop and implement programs aligned with the organization's strategic plan, with particular emphasis on Education and Community Engagement as critical pillars of the ISO's mission.
- Establish and monitor key performance indicators, using data-driven insights to inform decision-making and communicate results effectively to stakeholders.
- Provide strong leadership in recruiting, onboarding, professional development, performance management, and conflict resolution to support a positive, inclusive culture for both staff and musicians.
- Serve as a point person in the ISO's anticipated facilities renovation project.
- Serve as staff liaison and facilitator to the Facilities Committee of the Board of Directors.
- Foster collaboration across departments and between staff and musicians, breaking down silos to unite the organization around a shared vision and mission.
- Support the Symphony's artistic excellence by aligning operational systems and resources to enhance artistic endeavors.
- Contribute to union negotiations with a strategic, balanced approach that supports organizational goals and fosters positive labor relations.
- Build and maintain strong, collaborative partnerships with the CEO, Board of Directors, and other key stakeholders to advance governance and strategic priorities.
- Ensure full compliance with regulatory requirements and internal policies to uphold organizational integrity and mitigate risk.
- Champion the adoption and integration of new technologies that enhance operational efficiency and further the Symphony's mission.
- Expand community outreach through strategic relationship-building and collaboration with industry partners and civic organizations.
- Serve as a collaborative and trusted colleague to the CEO, taking ownership of operational responsibilities with initiative and minimal oversight, enabling the CEO to focus on vision and high-level leadership.
- Demonstrate adaptability and emotional intelligence in leadership style, fostering trust, unity, and high performance across a diverse team.
- Take decisive action to move initiatives forward, addressing ongoing challenges such as aging facilities while continuously improving operational functions.

Qualifications

- Minimum of seven years in an executive or senior leadership role, ideally within a complex nonprofit or performing arts organization
- Bachelor's degree in business, arts management, finance, or a related field; advanced degree a plus
- Demonstrated experience in nonprofit venue operations, including front-of-house, facilities management, and capital improvements
- Familiarity with orchestral or performing arts institutions and their artistic, operational, and revenue dynamics is preferred
- Proven ability to lead and motivate high-performing teams
- Strong strategic and analytical thinking, with a track record of effective problem-solving and sound decision-making
- High level of emotional intelligence and communication versatility—able to tailor messaging to musicians, staff, board, and patrons while building bridges across teams
- Exceptional interpersonal, presentation, and relationship-building skills
- Demonstrated integrity, professionalism, and commitment to organizational values
- Comfortable in a fast-paced, evolving environment with broad and hands-on responsibilities
- Proficiency in developing and using key performance indicators (KPIs) to drive results and measure success using key performance indicators (KPIs) to drive results and measure success

We seek to add professionals to our team who embody our shared values:

Inspiration: We strive to offer inspiring musical and educational experiences for everyone.

Unity: We believe that collaboration makes us stronger.

Integrity: We endeavor to instill a culture where everyone is treated with trust and respect.

Stewardship: We are entrusted with sustaining a treasured community resource and are committed to its success.



Compensation

Compensation for the Chief Operating Officer is \$170,000 to \$185,000 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 Rachael Holloway, Recruiter with ThinkingAhead Executive Search: jmcintosh@thinkingahead.com; rholloway@thinkingahead.com.

Contact Information:

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The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status or any other status protected by law.

We endeavor to model practices of diversity, inclusion, and equity in all that we do, including programming, people and culture, and community building. Through these practices, we will build a universal sense of belonging for all who connect with the ISO.

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.

