

ACADEMY OF MUSIC

OVERVIEW

Title: Executive Director

Reports to: Board of Trustees

Supervises: Director of Finance and Administration, Technical Director, Development and Communications Manager, Education Director, Theater Manager

Schedule and location: The Academy of Music is located in the center of Northampton. The Executive Director is expected to be on site and actively engaged in the life of the theater, with some flexibility for remote work to support balance and focus.

Pay Status: Salaried, Full-time, Exempt

Salary: Starting salary of \$120,000

Benefits and PTO: Paid vacation and accrued sick time, partial medical and dental benefits, and access to a 403(b) retirement plan with employer contributions subject to vesting.

Desired start date: July 1, 2026

Application Deadline: February 27. Early applications are encouraged.

Website

MISSION

Our mission is to enrich the Pioneer Valley's quality of life by offering first-class performing arts and film presentations in a historic theater of national significance. Encouraging the use of the historic stage for social, educational, and professional events, the Academy of Music seeks a broad and diverse audience through its programming and outreach efforts.

[Link to Artistic Guidelines](#)



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ABOUT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC

The Academy of Music ("the Academy") is a historic institution known for its elegant design and rich, storied past. In the late 19th century, Edward H.R. Lyman, a philanthropist and Northampton native, envisioned a new venue for culture and theater in his hometown. On May 23, 1891, the Academy opened its doors to the public for the first time. One year later, Lyman deeded the Academy to the citizens of Northampton, making it the first municipally owned theater in the nation. Located in the heart of downtown, the theater offers a unique platform for local, regional, and national performing artists.



As a nonprofit community-based organization, the Academy participates in downtown events such as First Night, co-produces KidsBestFest with the Northampton Arts Council, ensures affordable rental rates and ticket fees for local arts organizations and patrons, and supports and mentors local arts organizations in creating and staging successful productions.



With significant economic impact on the city and surrounding towns, the Academy is one of downtown Northampton's leading visitor destinations—not only through total ticket sales, but also through the consistent draw of visiting patrons to Northampton and its more than 100 shops and restaurants.

The Academy has an operating budget of just over \$1 million and is governed by ten voting members of the Board of Trustees, with the Mayor of Northampton serving ex officio and the President of Smith College as an honorary board member.

In 2023, the current Executive Director informed the Board of her intention to retire after nearly two decades of dedicated leadership. A substantial grant from the Barr-Klarman Massachusetts Arts Initiative supported the development of both a Leadership Transition Plan and Strategic Plan, ensuring the Academy is well positioned, well supported, and thoughtfully prepared as it embarks on this pivotal transition.

The Academy's programming falls into four primary categories:

- **Academy Productions:** Producing one to two plays annually, the Valley Voices Story Slam, the Regional Youth Poetry Slam, and special community events.
- **Academy Presentations:** Presenting national touring artists.
- **Rentals:** Hosting local and regional arts organizations and nonprofits, as well as promoters who present national touring acts.
- **Education Programming:** Offering programs for ages 6–19 in dance, show chorus, and musical theatre, including the production of three musical theatre shows annually.



ABOUT NORTHAMPTON

Northampton, Massachusetts is a vibrant small city in the Pioneer Valley known for its historic charm, progressive values, and a strong artistic and intellectual culture shaped in part by the presence of Smith College and neighboring Five College communities. With a population of just under 30,000, Northampton combines the intimacy and accessibility of a walkable downtown with the energy of a regional arts destination, home to galleries, live-music venues, theaters, independent shops, and a year-round calendar of cultural events.

The community is highly educated, culturally engaged, and widely known for its LGBTQ+ friendliness and inclusive social fabric, helping create a welcoming environment for residents, artists, and visitors. The city is surrounded by natural beauty providing outdoor recreation opportunities year round.

The cost of living remains more approachable than many metropolitan areas in Massachusetts, contributing to a sustainable quality of life for artists, educators, professionals, and families. This blend of cultural vitality, community engagement, and reasonable livability makes Northampton an ideal location for creative leadership and a thriving performing arts institution.



ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

The transition in leadership at the Academy creates a rare opportunity for a skilled and mission-driven Executive Director to step into a well-loved institution at a meaningful moment in its evolution. The Academy has been guided for nearly two decades by a deeply committed leader who has extensively restored and updated the theater, strengthened its profile, deepened community trust, and built an organization that is widely recognized as a cultural anchor for Northampton and the Pioneer Valley. With this strong foundation in place, the next Executive Director will inherit a vibrant theater, a passionate board and staff, and a community that cares deeply about the arts. The organization is poised for renewed clarity, thoughtful evolution, and deeper connection to the region's creative landscape, offering an incoming leader the chance to bring fresh ideas, build collaborative relationships, and steward a beloved historic venue into its next chapter.

For the right candidate, the role invites both meaningful work and visible impact. The Academy's reputation, stunning venue, and deep community roots provide an inspiring platform for a leader who values public service, artistic excellence, and community engagement. The breadth of the Executive Director's work — combining artistic vision, community partnerships, fundraising, storytelling, and organizational leadership — will appeal to someone energized by multidimensional roles and community arts settings. The next leader will be welcomed into an environment receptive to new approaches, strengthened internal culture, dedicated volunteers and audiences, and the continued evolution toward a more distributed, collaborative leadership model. This is an ideal role for someone who finds satisfaction in building capacity over time, strengthening systems, and shaping a future vision that reflects both tradition and possibility.



AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE NEXT LEADER

The following focus areas are grounded in stakeholder insight and represent meaningful opportunities for collaboration, thoughtful leadership, and steady organizational development.

- 1. Financial Resilience & Long-Term Sustainability** - Continue adapting to changing audience trends, explore earned and contributed revenue opportunities, and position the Academy for long-term facility, programmatic, and organizational sustainability.
- 2. Organizational Effectiveness & Team Support** - Strengthen internal workflows, communication practices, and cross-department coordination while fostering a collaborative, supportive organizational culture that promotes staff confidence, professional growth, and wellbeing.

3. Mission, Identity & Public Voice - Guide shared conversations around mission, identity, and brand expression to ensure the Academy's public voice clearly reflects its values, aspirations, and role as a community-centered cultural institution.

4. Community Integration & Strategic Partnerships - Deepen relationships with the City, Five Colleges, local arts organizations, schools, and community partners to expand access, strengthen collaboration, and increase the Academy's community impact.

5. Programming Strategy & Governance Partnership - Balance rental, presented, and mission-aligned programming while working closely with the board and staff to ensure strategic alignment, clear roles, and thoughtful long-term planning.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Artistic Direction, Programming & Community Engagement

- Shape a clear artistic and programming vision that advances the Academy's mission and strengthens its role as a community-centered cultural hub.
- Curate presented and produced events, film, and educational programming in collaboration with internal leaders, promoters, renters, and artistic partners.
- Foster relationships across local arts organizations, educational institutions, and civic stakeholders, serving as a visible spokesperson and community ambassador.
- Support brand storytelling, audience development, and communications strategies that reflect the Academy's mission, inclusivity, and artistic profile.

Financial Planning, Fundraising & Sustainability

- Oversee financial planning, budgeting, and performance in partnership with the board, the finance committee, and the Director of Finance and Administration.
- Develop and strengthen earned revenue strategies across programming and operations—including ticketed performances, education programs, rentals, and presenting activity—to support long-term financial sustainability, while balancing mission impact and organizational capacity.
- In partnership with the board and with the support of the Development and Communications Manager, build meaningful relationships that drive contributed revenue from individual donors, foundations, businesses, and government partners, and steward the Academy's reputation as a trusted community nonprofit.
- Work collaboratively with the City of Northampton on capital planning, facility-related grants, and shared financial oversight connected to building projects.



Organizational Leadership, Culture & Operations

- Support a healthy and collaborative staff culture grounded in communication, professional development, clarity of roles, and shared purpose.
- Promote interdepartmental alignment across finance, education, rentals, production, technical operations, audience services, and development.
- Steward the historic facility and coordinate with the City and technical leadership on maintenance, capital priorities, infrastructure needs, and operational planning.
- Serve as a thought partner and steady collaborator with staff, volunteers, renters, and artists to ensure a positive experience across the Academy's ecosystem.

Board Partnership & Strategic Alignment

- Work closely with the board to advance long-term organizational vision, annual goals, and progress toward strategic priorities.
- Provide transparent reporting, financial and program performance insights, and thoughtful recommendations that support informed governance.
- Engage the board in fundraising and community relationships while clarifying shared roles and building strong alignment between board and staff leadership.



WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

The ideal Executive Director will be a trusted leader, a skilled communicator, and a visible community presence who embraces the Academy's mission, history, and civic role. They will bring a balance of artistic literacy, nonprofit management, financial acumen, and genuine enthusiasm for working in partnership with staff, board, artists, local organizations, donors, and municipal leaders. Collaborative and steady in their leadership style, the ED will listen deeply, foster internal alignment, and engage the community with warmth, clarity, and cultural awareness. They will thrive in a multidimensional environment where programming, community engagement, fundraising, storytelling, and organizational stewardship are interconnected.

Required Skills and Prior Experience:

- **Leadership in the Performing Arts Ecosystem** – Significant leadership experience (typically gained over several years and through multiple leadership roles) within a performing arts, presenting, or community arts organization, with fluency in programming cycles, production needs, and the rhythms of a presenting house.
- **Artistic Literacy & Program Insight** – Direct experience with arts programming, event booking or rentals, and an understanding of how to balance presented work, community programs, and mission-aligned artistic decisions.

- **Nonprofit Management & Staff Leadership** – Experience managing a mid-sized nonprofit, guiding teams, supervising department leaders, and supporting a collaborative and inclusive staff culture.
- **Community Presence & External Relationships** – Passion for serving as a visible ambassador, cultivating strong relationships with municipal partners, mission-aligned organizations, academic institutions, and local businesses to integrate the organization into the cultural and civic fabric of a community.
- **Industry Representation and Advocacy** – Experience serving as a representative and advocate for an organization and its mission area across regional, statewide, and national platforms, including participation in professional associations, conferences, and sector-wide initiatives, and contributing to broader conversations that shape arts funding, policy, and field-wide collaboration.
- **Facility & Capital Stewardship** – Experience leading and coordinating facility, capital, and/or infrastructure projects. Comfort collaborating with municipal partners; an understanding of how historic buildings shape operational needs is a bonus.
- **Financial & Operational Competence** – Skill with budgeting, financial planning, earned and contributed revenue strategies, and operational oversight that supports long-term sustainability and informs effective decision-making.
- **Fundraising, Grants & Relationship Development** – Experience with fundraising across a range of sources, including individual donors, foundations, public funding, and community-based support.
- **Board Leadership & Collaborative Governance** - Track record of cultivating board development, engaging the board in fundraising and community partnerships, and fostering a culture of clarity, accountability, shared vision, and an effective, authentic working relationship between board and staff.
- **Communication & Collaborative Leadership** – Excellent interpersonal and communication skills; ability to listen actively, integrate multiple perspectives, present confidently in public settings, and nurture a workplace culture grounded in trust and shared purpose.
- **Equity Orientation & Cultural Awareness** – A demonstrated commitment to equitable, inclusive, and welcoming practices; experience addressing systemic barriers within organizations and communities; and the ability to engage diverse communities with cultural humility.
- **Youth Arts and Educational Programming** – Experience with youth arts or educational programming is highly desirable, given the Academy's strong foundation and meaningful potential for future growth and revenue.
- **Educational or Professional Preparation** – A comparable depth of professional experience in organizational leadership in the performing arts; graduate training in arts administration, performing arts, business, or related fields is preferred.

TO APPLY

The Academy has engaged [LJN Advisory](#) to partner with them in hiring for this important role. Please email a cover letter and resume by February 27 to LJN@lornajanenorris.com with “**Academy of Music – ED Application**” in the subject line. Attach your cover letter and resume as separate PDF files, and include your last name in each file name. *Cover letters should be responsive to the mission and values of the Academy and to the responsibilities and qualifications laid out in the full position profile.* We will begin reviewing applications right away and encourage candidates to apply early. Each application will be acknowledged and given careful attention.

Inclusivity & Accessibility Statement

The Academy of Music is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status.

We know that no candidate will meet every requirement listed, and encourage you to apply even if you don't check every box. We recognize that leadership excellence is developed through many pathways and encourage candidates whose experience may not follow a traditional nonprofit or arts leadership trajectory to apply.

If you require any accommodations during the hiring process—such as for scheduling, interview format, or written materials—please let us know. We are committed to making the process accessible, respectful, and welcoming for all.