

## Organization

The Grand Rapids Symphony (Symphony) was established in 1930, and the steadfast commitment of visionary community leaders have created an organization that has received national recognition for the high quality of its concerts and educational programs. The Symphony reaches the lives of approximately 200,000 people annually and nearly half of those who benefit are students, senior citizens, and people with disabilities engaged through extensive education and community service programs.

Led by Brazilian-born Music Director Marcelo Lehninger and Principal Pops Conductor Bob Bernhardt, the Symphony presents multiple concert series with performances designed to capture the imagination of young children and adults alike, featuring a wide range of music and performance styles. Lehninger is beginning his seventh season as Music Director, and in 2018 he brought the Symphony to Carnegie Hall for its first performance at the famed venue in thirteen years. He previously served as Music Director of the New West Symphony north of Los Angeles, for which the League of American Orchestras awarded him the Helen H. Thompson Award for Emerging Music Directors. Previously, Lehninger served as Assistant and then Associate Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra where he led the world premiere of a violin concerto by Harrison Birtwistle and later repeated the program in his Carnegie Hall debut in 2011.

The Symphony's affiliated organizations include the Grand Rapids Bach Festival, Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra, and Symphony Friends. The Symphony also provides the orchestra for Opera Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Ballet Company. The Symphony performs at the 2,543-seat DeVos Performance Hall, as well as Royce Auditorium housed in Saint Cecilia Music Center, a historic event venue that houses 650 seats for a more intimate performance.

The vision for the Symphony is to be a more integral and indispensable part of the West Michigan community. The institution has long been an important part of the community, with musical excellence, diverse programming, collaborative spirit, and a commitment to learning all adding to the quality of life enjoyed in West Michigan.

The Symphony's purpose is to excel at providing distinctive musical experiences, with an emphasis on live orchestral music, for diverse audiences throughout West Michigan. Its mission is to share great music that moves the human soul. The Symphony is proud to offer a wide range of programs for children of all ages and their families. From Family Concerts to performing ensembles and scholarships, there are many of ways to experience, explore, and create music with the Grand Rapids Symphony. Additionally, the Symphony's Music for Health Initiative combines the artistry of the Symphony's musicians with the expertise of music therapists to bring the healing power of music to patients facing health challenges ranging from brain injury to dementia to cancer. The Symphony also offers unique experiences for the "young at heart" to explore great music and great art from engaging pre-concert talks to behind-the-scenes tours.

The Symphony employs 52 full-time and 28 per-service musicians over a 40-week season with 36 weeks in the main/winter season and four weeks in the summer. The Symphony can also utilize the Integrated Media Agreement, and its Electronic Media Guarantee to publicize and distribute its performances. It has a dedicated and highly acclaimed 130-voice volunteer Chorus under the leadership of Dr. Pearl Shangkuan.

The Symphony currently has a 44-member board of directors led by Chairperson Luis Avila with Renee C. Tabben as Chairperson Elect beginning her term in 2023. The President & CEO is an ex-officio member of the board of directors and serves as President of the Grand Rapids Symphony Foundation. This individual oversees 31 administrative and artistic staff members in both full- and part-time positions. The Symphony's anticipated fiscal 2023 revenues are approximately \$10.4 million with \$4.3 million from contributions and grants, \$3 million from program services and miscellaneous revenues, and \$3 million from Foundation investment draws. Its permanently restricted endowment, held by the Grand Rapids Symphony Foundation, stands at approximately \$26 million with an additional \$20 million in a donor advised fund overseen by the DeVos Foundation.

## Community

The Grand Rapids metropolitan area is populated by more than 1.4 million people as the second largest in the state and includes the cities of Muskegon, Holland, Grand Haven, and Saugatuck, among others. The City of Grand Rapids is home to almost 200,000 people and includes a diverse population that is approximately 58% White, 18% Black/African American, 16% Hispanic or Latino, 3% Asian, and 7% mixed race. Grand Rapids draws tourists from around the United States and beyond to its world-class attractions and performing arts venues and activities, such as DeVos Place Convention Center, Van Andel Arena, John Ball Zoological Garden, Grand Rapids Art, Public, and Children's Museums, and the 125-acre Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, which is home to works of art from Auguste Rodin, Edgar Degas, as well as American sculptors such as Alexander Calder. Both the international airport and freeway are named after the former President, Gerald R. Ford, and the city is also home to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum.

With a strong business climate and exceptionally high quality of life, it is no surprise businesses and talent are flocking to the region. More than 130 international companies are located in the region, as well as four of Forbes Largest Private Companies. The region is home to the global headquarters of industry leaders like Amway, Steelcase, Herman Miller, Haworth, BISSELL, Meijer, Wolverine Worldwide, and more. There is an energy pulsating from West Michigan that is felt throughout the Midwest. Business and community leaders have set in motion an unprecedented level of growth and investment, cementing its place as a world-class center for advanced manufacturing, life science and medical devices, food processing, and technology.

A short drive from the spectacular beaches of Lake Michigan, Grand Rapids was ranked the #1 Best Place to Raise a Family in 2021 by *Rocket Homes*, #2 on the *Livability* Top 10 Remote-Ready Cities in the U.S., and as #7 in the *U.S. News & World Report's* Most Affordable Places to Live in the U.S. for 2021-2022.

Sources: [rightplace.org](https://rightplace.org); [experiencegr.com](https://experiencegr.com); [rockethomes.com/blog/housing-market/best-places-to-raise-a-family](https://rockethomes.com/blog/housing-market/best-places-to-raise-a-family); [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov); [livability.com/topics/education-careers-opportunity/2021-top-10-remote-ready-cities-in-the-us](https://livability.com/topics/education-careers-opportunity/2021-top-10-remote-ready-cities-in-the-us); [realestate.usnews.com/places/rankings/cheapest-places-to-live](https://realestate.usnews.com/places/rankings/cheapest-places-to-live); [rightplace.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/](https://rightplace.nyc3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/)

## Position Summary

The President & CEO will advance the mission of the Grand Rapids Symphony, maintain its fiscal resiliency in an evolving world, and oversee a dynamic leadership team. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President & CEO will partner with the Music Director to bolster the visibility of the Symphony, uplift its artistic vision, engage with its diverse community, and build authentic relationships locally and nationally. Actively engaged in supporting current and crafting new partnerships with other artistic, educational, social justice, and other organizations, this individual will be a visible presence and respected leader. The President & CEO will be proactive in board and donor relations with a focus on garnering philanthropic support, as well as maximizing earned revenue opportunities and promoting fiscal responsibility throughout the organization. This individual will also mentor, coach, guide, and advise an experienced senior management team and empower their professional growth and personal advancement.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Strategic Innovation and Community Engagement

- Incubate, engage in, and strategize about the Symphony's future artistic, educational, and community position within the vibrant Grand Rapids region and beyond.
- Develop strategies with and oversee implementation by the senior leadership team in artistic administration, marketing, development, education, community relations, and finance areas.
- Innovate and elevate the Symphony's profile for those who are regular program attendees, as well as potential new audiences, educators, political leaders, and donors.
- Regularly attend artistic partner programs and actively engage across the community as the Symphony's chief ambassador and cheerleader through a variety of events, organizations, and other opportunities that provide opportunities to network and share the work of the Symphony.
- Actively engage and participate at the leadership level with executive directors in the League of American Orchestras or similar peer-serving organizations.
- Embrace other strategic innovation and community engagement responsibilities, as needed.

### Donor Relations and Board & Foundation Governance

- Oversee the development of effective action plans to maximize the portfolio of individual, corporation, foundation, government, and special event donors.

- Regularly meet with current and potential donors through orchestra, community, and fundraising events in collaboration with the Vice President of Development.
- Collaborate with Board and Committee Chairs to oversee meeting agendas and materials preparation for Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Nominating & Governance Committee, Donor Development Committee, Corporate Development Committee, Education Committee, and Audience Development Committee, and participate in those meetings.
- In partnership with the Chairs of the Symphony and Foundation boards, proactively cultivate potential board members that reflect the skillsets, experiences, and diversity of high performing boards.
- Develop and advise on board orientation, education, and engagement activities, as well as leadership succession planning strategies.
- Ensure regular and effective communications with the Board outside of regular meetings, as needed.
- Engage with the Foundation Chair regarding Symphony operations, financial results, and cash flow.
- Maintain regular interactions with the Foundation's fiduciary investment advisors.
- Embrace other donor relations and board & foundation governance responsibilities, as needed.

### **Artistic Engagement and Support**

- Serve as the Music Director's main point of contact and engage with the musicians regularly in collaboration with the Vice President & General Manager.
- Engage strategically with the Symphony's artistic partners, including the Grand Rapids Ballet, Opera Grand Rapids, St. Cecilia Music Center, and Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.
- Participate in collective bargaining agreement negotiations alongside the Vice President & General Manager, and present at periodic mandatory and optional orchestra meetings.
- Strategize with the Vice President & General Manager in negotiations with the artists, including conductor contracts, as well as oversee the Chorus Director and Principal Pops Conductor with the Music Director.
- Hold quarterly affiliate update meetings in conjunction with the Symphony's quarterly Board meetings as the principal contact for the Youth Symphony, Adult Chorus, Symphony Friends, and Bach Festival.
- Embrace other artistic engagement and support responsibilities, as needed.

### **Fiscal Resiliency and Organizational Diversity**

- Guide long-term financial planning with the Assistant Vice President of Finance and monitor cash flow projections, budgeting, monthly results, modeling and scenario planning, annual audit and associated tax filings, federal grant compliance (i.e. PPP, SVOG, NEA), office lease, and administrative contracts.
- Steer the development of marketing strategies and action plans for concerts, ticket sales, program book, and patron experience activities with the Vice President of Marketing & Communications.
- Advise affiliates on financial matters such as budgets, cash handling, bill payments, and internal controls, and ensure strategic budgeting and sound day to day financial management.
- Participate in media interviews, write occasional communications for different audiences, and give Symphony presentations in community venues for institutional marketing.
- Accelerate institutional diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives with board, staff, musicians, and artists.
- Identify transformational leadership opportunities for the Symphony, such as diversity fellowships and funding.
- Oversee health plan coverage and costs, employee workers comp/FMLA/disability issues, benefit plan administration, employment policies, and employee performance reviews with the Assistant Vice President of Administration and Board Relations.
- Embrace other fiscal resiliency and organizational diversity responsibilities, as needed.

### **Traits and Characteristics**

The President & CEO will be a collaborative and diplomatic servant leader, both internally and externally, in guiding organizational and community alignment. Pragmatic, thoughtful, an excellent listener, and fiscally focused, this individual will embrace opportunities for proactive thinking and measured change. The President & CEO will be instinctive and authentic by nature in establishing, cultivating, and building relationships throughout the region. A people-oriented problem solver who regularly interacts with diverse individuals and stakeholder groups, the

President & CEO will adapt to changing global circumstances and evolve the business model to meet the artistic, education, and community needs of the multiple constituencies that it serves.

Other key competencies include:

- **Leadership and Resiliency** – The ability to organize and motivate others to accomplish goals, create a sense of direction, adapt to changing global circumstances, develop a deeply rooted organizational culture, and gain active participation from board, staff, musicians, donors, and strategic partners.
- **Interpersonal Skills** – The flexibility to anticipate, meet, and exceed stakeholder and partner needs while communicating effectively, building rapport, listening carefully, and relating well to an array of diverse constituencies.
- **Negotiation, Teamwork, and Diplomacy** – The capacity to understand diverse stakeholder perspectives and set a course of action that respects others, treats them fairly regardless of personal biases or beliefs, and maintains positive and productive relationships based in mutually beneficial agreements.
- **Personal and Professional Accountability** – The integrity to meet the highest ethical standards in establishing relevant, realistic, and attainable goals and objectives while anticipating the effects, outcomes, and calculated risks of various options.

## Qualifications

A minimum of seven to nine years of progressively responsible senior management experience in financial oversight, strategic planning, and community engagement is essential. Demonstrable expertise in cultivating philanthropic support, maximizing earned revenues, and financial accountability is necessary. A bachelor's degree or equivalent experience is required and a master's degree or relevant expertise in business, the arts, nonprofit management, or a related field is preferred. A passion for and commitment to the performing arts sector, specifically classical music and pops programming, is expected. Candidates must also have exceptional writing and verbal communication skills, the ability to regularly travel throughout the region, and the capacity to attend evening and weekend performances.

## Compensation and Benefits

The Grand Rapids Symphony offers an attractive compensation package with a base salary estimated in the range of \$175,000 to \$210,000. Employee benefits include competitive medical and vision insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, 100% employer paid life insurance and long-term disability, 100% paid dental insurance for employee, paid time off, sick days, paid holidays, company wellness closures, flexible work from home and in-office hybrid arrangements, and the quality of life that Grand Rapids and West Michigan provide.

## Applications and Inquiries

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable revenue, fiscal accountability, and community engagement accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit [artsconsulting.com/employment](https://artsconsulting.com/employment). For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

Dr. Bruce D. Thibodeau, President  
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**Grand Rapids Symphony values diversity, and it supports and maintains a policy of full compliance with applicable laws prohibiting discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, creed, gender, age, national origin or ancestry, ethnicity, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), qualified disabled status, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, childbirth and related medical conditions, veteran status and other personal characteristics covered by applicable federal, state, or local law.**