



# LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA

TEDDY ABRAMS · MUSIC DIRECTOR

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

The Louisville Orchestra (LO), among the most adventurous and innovative orchestras in the nation, seeks a steady, experienced, and inspiring leader to become its next Executive Director. Since its founding in 1937, the LO has been the 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 unbounded 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 LO in myriad new directions. Long respected for its excellence and always commended for its ingenuity, the Orchestra's programmatic innovations have expanded and accelerated under Abrams' vision, as has its reputation for producing the spectacular. Today's LO takes the national spotlight more than ever before, earning unprecedented levels of attention and acclaim, including a recent Grammy Award.

The current moment for the Louisville Orchestra presents the opportunity to activate an inflection point. The incoming executive will inherit an organization that has done the most complex and vital work to survive and thrive. After eleven years of Abrams' musical leadership, experimentation and *the unexpected* are now inextricably woven into the LO's musical excellence and its brand. The LO has also seen, with fresh eyes, its impact on the public's well-being and its potential to serve its city, Commonwealth, and community even more effectively. The LO seeks an Executive Director to secure the organization's capacity to deliver on its mission—and its aspirations—consistently and sustainably into the future.

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors, works side-by-side with the Music Director, and partners with the staff and musicians to solidify and expand the LO's impact and legacy. They must fortify the organizational infrastructure, internal capacity, and resources to match the LO's ambition and its pace.

Our next Executive Director will bring substantial administrative experience to the role and reside full-time in the community. They should be visionary, strategically creative, and comfortable taking thoughtful, calculated risks. The next Executive Director must be an exceptional communicator and listener. This leader should be both forward-facing and a skilled institutional steward, able to adapt to evolving circumstances and priorities. The LO seeks a candidate who will make a long-term, multi-year commitment to the LO and community.

## **ABOUT THE LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA**

Founded in 1937 in response to Louisville's Great Flood, the Louisville Orchestra has built a national reputation for innovation, performing at Carnegie Hall, the White House, and the Kennedy Center, and earning 19 ASCAP awards. In addition, the LO has commissioned over 180 works and over 260

recordings. Our commitment to creativity and accessibility led to our first Grammy Award this past year.

Under the leadership of Music Director Teddy Abrams, the LO continues to redefine the modern orchestra. Teddy views music as a unifying force, and community-based performances are central to this vision. In 2022, the LO launched the groundbreaking Creators Corps, embedding composers within Louisville to create music that reflects and uplifts our community. That same year, the Kentucky General Assembly awarded \$4.3 million to bring world-class orchestral music statewide, with additional funding in 2024 to expand this work.

Recognized as an essential public service, the LO is committed to reducing the urban-rural divide through programs like the In Harmony statewide tour, Music Without Borders, and Once Upon an Orchestra. We are not simply adapting to the future of music—we are helping shape it through innovation, inclusiveness, and impact.

The LO is Kentucky's resident symphony, headquartered in Louisville and serving the entire Commonwealth. A mid-sized orchestra with a \$12.2M operating budget, the LO employs/contracts more than 150 artists, musicians, and staff across a 34-week season. We are home to 61 full-time musicians and are supported by 28 administrative staff.

Most Classical and Pops performances take place at Whitney Hall at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, with additional programs staged throughout the metro area. The LO also serves as the resident orchestra for the Louisville Ballet and Kentucky Opera.

The organization is governed by a 44-member Board of Directors, including two voting musician representatives. The Board of Directors is composed of leading business, civic, philanthropic, and educational figures who meet five times annually.

## **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 execute the Orchestra's 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 enable the institution's forward momentum.

Our next Executive Director will be a compelling ambassador and organizational leader, accountable for managing and developing a team of senior leaders, ensuring that all departments are aligned and collaborate to achieve the artistic vision of the Music Director and stewardship goals of the Board. At present, the Executive Director's eight (8) direct reports include the Chief of Staff, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Development, Director of Endowment Giving, Director of Artistic Operations, Director of Marketing, Director of Patron Services, and Director of Strategic Partnerships.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

In our next Executive Director, the LO seeks a leader with meaningful stature in the arts, significant administrative experience, 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. Although executive experience in professional orchestra management and administration is desired, candidates with significant executive experience in other types of non-profit organizations, and who have substantial passion for and knowledge of the arts and orchestral music, are encouraged to apply. The successful candidate will be required to maintain a full-time residence within Louisville/Jefferson County (preferred) or surrounding counties and reside here in Louisville full-time (minus ordinary vacation, family commitments, similar). Leading the Louisville Orchestra is 'more than a full-time job'—candidates are discouraged from pursuing other contract or similar engagement in addition to this role. While no 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 or other governing body
- Demonstrated change management skills
- The capacity to work respectfully and collectively on challenges 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 the Music Director
- A principled commitment to social justice and the values of equity, diversity, 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

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The next Executive Director will be well-positioned to take advantage of the ongoing opportunities that 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, our next Executive Director will address the following opportunities and challenges:

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

The Louisville Orchestra's identity continues to evolve, with its community mission standing alongside its commitment to musical excellence. The next Executive Director will work closely with Music Director Teddy Abrams and the broader LO community to refine and advance this vision of artist-driven civic leadership. This role offers a critical opportunity to help shape a modern model for the American orchestra; one that remains relevant, essential, and deeply connected to its increasingly diverse constituencies.

The Executive Director partners with the Music Director, senior leadership, staff, and board to identify, strengthen, and develop artistic, educational, and community engagement programs, among others; support emerging initiatives; pursue innovative ideas; and ensure alignment with the LO's mission. Collaboration with Abrams will be essential in fostering a proactive, strategic, and inventive approach to the organization's future.

The next Executive Director will also lead the organization through a multi-year strategic planning process that charts practical, achievable steps toward the LO's continued growth and self-realization.

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

In this next chapter, the Orchestra is positioned to make further advancements, anchoring the innovations of recent years and solidifying its place as an essential institution for the region and for orchestras worldwide. The next Executive Director will prioritize the sustainability of this orchestral paradigm and further refine all current artistic endeavors.

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

The Louisville Orchestra's FY2025–2026 operating budget is \$12.2 million. Approximately 21% of revenue is earned through ticket sales, 7% through investment income, and 72% is contributed support—a reflection of the central role of donors in sustaining the Orchestra's artistic and community impact. The LO benefits from significant public investment through the Kentucky General Assembly (including \$2 million annually for the *In Harmony* statewide tour) and Louisville Metro Government, as well as generous support from local and national foundations, corporate sponsors, major individual donors, and the Association of the Louisville Orchestra (ALO), a volunteer-led organization that raises annual funding for the Orchestra.

Recognizing the limitations of traditional ticket-based revenue, the next Executive Director will be expected to partner closely with the Development Team and the Music Director to strengthen and diversify the LO's financial model. This will require a blend of creative, entrepreneurial thinking and disciplined business leadership.

The LO is in the silent phase of a \$50 million endowment campaign, which has raised more than \$20 million to date, including cash and pledges (of the \$12 million pledged, \$10 million is in planned gifts). This effort, along with other initiatives, presents a significant opportunity to deepen patron engagement and cultivate long-term major donors. The Louisville Orchestra is also the beneficiary of two other endowments that total \$15 million.

The next Executive Director will be responsible for maintaining the Orchestra's overall financial health and working closely with the Chief Financial Officer to ensure funds are managed, invested, allocated, and disbursed responsibly. They will also provide regular financial reporting to the Board.

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

Community is at the heart of 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 critically important. The Executive Director will be expected to maintain and develop deep partnerships and relationships with key members of the Louisville civic, business, educational, and social communities. The Executive Director plays a key role, as an essential public-facing representative of the Orchestra, in maintaining these critical relationships.

The LO has expanded its musical and public service footprint far beyond the greater Louisville bi-state region area through the *In Harmony, The Commonwealth Tour*, which began in 2022, and now serves as a cultural resource, unifying Kentucky and engaging all corners of its rich fabric. Funding is sought and secured from private philanthropic, industry, and government sources for this annual statewide Kentucky Tour, by which the LO directly engages 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 and with

state leaders, 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.

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

The LO has deepened its work in equity, diversity, and inclusion in recent years, guided by a racial equity statement that affirms music's role in challenging injustice and fostering community healing. The organization aims to broaden the racial and ethnic diversity of its board, artistic, and administrative staffs, and to strengthen engagement with underserved neighborhoods in Louisville and rural communities across Kentucky.

Our next Executive Director will be expected to champion this vision—supporting programming that reflects diverse artists and repertoire and advancing LO's broader EDI goals throughout the organization.

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

The people who work at The LO are a dedicated and talented group—high functioning and highly efficacious. The next Executive Director will honor the contributions of every member of the LO community and foster a positive, 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. The Executive Director will prioritize recruiting, supporting, retaining, and developing the talented staff who enable the LO to do its best work. They will be a unifying force, strategically convening groups, facilitating meaningful conversations, and guiding consensus-building processes, helping to navigate relations among musicians, staff, board members, donors, and other key stakeholders. This includes close engagement with the Louisville Orchestra Musicians Committee (LOMC) 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 we serve. The next ED will build on this strong foundation and draw on its 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 for the ED, while taking an active role in planning for the future, recruiting, and developing new leaders.

### ***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 LO's life, Maestro Whitney and the Mayor of Louisville, Charles Farnsley, hatched an adventurous plan to make 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 also to attract 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: the premiere of a new commission by American composer William Schuman was met with wide critical acclaim and led to an invitation to perform at Carnegie Hall. 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](#), directed by Owsley Brown III and Jerome Hiler, chronicles this extraordinary achievement.) In 1981, the ensemble was officially augmented to full-time status.

The attention garnered led to other opportunities: “A Festival of the Arts” at the White House in 1965; the Inter-American Music Festival at the Kennedy Center in 1991, “Great Orchestras of the World” at Carnegie Hall in 2001, and a tour to Mexico City in 1981. 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***

In its early years, the LO helped reshape the American symphony model through its commitment to commissioning new works and building a proprietary record label. Over time, however, shifting cultural and media landscapes, paired with changes in Louisville’s business community and the early 2000s recession, placed significant strain on the organization. By 2010, severe budget shortfalls led the LO to file for Chapter 11 reorganization in FY11. As a result, the concert hall was dark during FY12.

The Orchestra reemerged in FY13 with new leadership, a refreshed roster of musicians, an energized board, and a balanced annual budget, reflecting the resilience of its supporters and the city’s determination to secure the Orchestra’s future.

In 2014, the LO appointed Teddy Abrams as Music Director. Abrams revitalized the Orchestra’s legacy of commissioning, performing, and recording new music while expanding its focus on community-centered performances and collaborations.

### ***Education and Community Impact***

The LO has a long tradition of education and community engagement, partnering with schools and organizations across Kentucky. Its MakingMUSIC program, founded in 1940, remains one of the nation’s longest-running music education initiatives, reaching all 4<sup>th</sup>- and 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students in the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) system through free ensemble visits and full-orchestra concerts.

The LO offers a suite of programs that combine music, learning, and accessibility. MakingMUSIC continues to anchor the LO's education work, serving nearly 13,000 students annually and pairing orchestral classics with youth composers and student ensembles. Once Upon an Orchestra, created with the Louisville Free Public Library, blends storytelling, instrument-making, and live ensemble performances at all library branches and partner sites. Its Pre-K adaptation, Tunes and Tales, uses original LO Creators Corps music to build early literacy and memory skills, supported by measurable learning gains in pilot classrooms. The program also provides professional development to help educators integrate music-based learning.

Music Without Borders brings free full-orchestra concerts to historically underserved neighborhoods, paired with year-round community engagement events.

The In Harmony Tour extends the LO's work statewide, offering free performances and family programs to communities across Kentucky, including 36 free concerts, 158 community engagement events, and 67 education services at schools, resulting in over 31,000 attendees as of July 2025. These initiatives reflect the Orchestra's belief that music can bridge divides, strengthen community ties, and promote equity. Under Teddy Abrams' artistic leadership, the LO continues to diversify its programming, invest in living composers, and empower young people through innovative programs such as the Louisville Orchestra Rap School.

Collectively, these efforts define the LO's evolving model: a modern orchestra that is both a cultural institution and a public service, dedicated to creativity, accessibility, and community impact.

### ***Collective Bargaining***

In June of 2024, LO and its musicians ratified a new three-year master contract agreement through 2027. 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).

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

The Louisville Orchestra serves as a central force in the region's arts and culture ecosystem, setting the standard for innovative programming and community engagement. Louisville, the largest city in Kentucky, sits along the mile-wide Ohio River and blends Southern and Midwestern influences.

With a metropolitan population of roughly 1.3 million, the city offers a remarkably diverse cultural landscape, including acclaimed theater, ballet, and opera, as well as museum institutions; multiple collegiate and professional sports teams; and a thriving tourism industry driven by its bourbon distilleries, nationally recognized dining scene, and growing attractions.

Louisville also features extensive green spaces, from the award-winning Waterfront Park and historic Olmsted-designed neighborhood parks to the Parklands of Floyds Fork, one of the nation's most significant new urban park systems.

### **Current Leadership**

The next Executive Director will succeed Nathaniel Koch, who joined the organization as the Interim Executive Director in March 2025. Koch has served the LO for over 19 years and has filled a wide range of roles, previously serving as the Chief of Staff. Prior to Koch's leadership, the LO was under Graham Parker's direction for three years.

### **Music Director Teddy Abrams**

Grammy Award-winning conductor-composer Teddy Abrams is set to embark on his twelfth season as Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra (LO), where he has been the galvanizing force behind the ensemble's extraordinary artistic renewal and innovative social impact. Beginning in September 2026, he will also serve as Artistic and Executive Director of California's Ojai Music Festival. He was chosen as *Musical America's* 2022 Conductor of the Year. His work has been profiled by *CBS Sunday Morning*, *PBS NewsHour*, *NPR*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*, which hails him as a "maestro of the people" who "has embedded himself in his community, breaking the mold of modern conductors." He has become an integrated fixture in the Louisville community, forging deep relationships with civic, philanthropic, and business leaders who are essential to the Orchestra. Abrams' contract with the LO runs through 2027/2028 season.

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

Nominations and applications, including CV and cover letter, can be sent electronically, in confidence, to the following: [jobs@21cmmediagroup.com](mailto:jobs@21cmmediagroup.com). Closing date for applications is March 1, 2026.

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