

Position Opportunity

Artistic Director Opera Theatre of Saint Louis Saint Louis, MO

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis invites nominations and applications for the position of Artistic Director. An international search for Opera Theatre's next Artistic Director is underway, following the recent appointment of James Robinson, who served with distinction as OTSL's Artistic Director since 2009, to the role of General and Artistic Director of Seattle Opera. Prior to Robinson, the lauded British director Colin Graham served as the company's first Artistic Director from 1985–2007. An international search for Opera Theatre's next Artistic Director is underway.

The Company

ExperienceOpera.org

Celebrating a landmark 50th Festival Season in 2025, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL) is broadly recognized and highly acclaimed for its local impact, national presence, and global resonance.

OTSL's mission is *to shape a vibrant future for opera by connecting, inspiring, and entertaining our communities through the power and beauty of the art form; to foster the next generation by empowering a diverse group of artists, artisans, and administrators at the highest level; and to make opera accessible and inclusive through innovative and collaborative storytelling that reflects, engages, and strengthens the St. Louis community, and attracts national and international audiences.*

Upon emerging from the pandemic in 2021, OTSL adopted a five-year strategic plan that reaffirmed the company's founding principles even as it looked forward toward the 50th season. The Strategic Plan articulates three primary goals:

First, to be an **incubator for the next generation of excellence in opera** by advancing young talent on and off stage and nurturing new work that will move the art form forward.

Second, to **make opera accessible and to deepen our impact within the St. Louis community** by telling stories that foster dialogue and by forging partnerships throughout the community year-round.

And third, to build the infrastructure of physical, human, and financial resources that will **sustain not only the company's 50th Festival Season, but its next fifty years.**

Across all three categories, the Strategic Plan is **anchored in the company's deep commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.**

At the center of its year-round activity, Opera Theatre produces an annual festival season of four inventive productions. Every opera is sung in English and accompanied by the Grammy Award-winning St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. Performances take place in the intimate Loretto-Hilton Center at Webster University; before and after the performances, audiences are invited to gather in the surrounding gardens for picnics, drinks, and conversation alongside artists and artisans from the season.

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has an annual operating budget of \$13 million and an endowment greater than \$100 million dollars. The organization is governed by a board of 60 community leaders and has a year-round professional staff of approximately 45. Andrew Jorgensen is General Director; Patricia Racette is Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs; Daniela Candillari is Principal Conductor.

The Opportunity

As Opera Theatre approaches its 50th Festival Season, Andrew Jorgensen described “an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on all that we have accomplished in our first fifty years, including bringing dozens of new operas to the stage, launching hundreds of careers, and impacting countless lives through the power of opera. Even as we mark this moment, we’re also looking forward to our next fifty years and to a bright future... I truly believe that the best is yet to come and look forward to partnering with a new Artistic Director to advance OTSL and opera, keeping this company at the forefront of the field.”

The next Artistic Director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis will have the opportunity to collaborate with the General Director and OTSL’s executive leadership team to advance the company’s strategic plan and artistic vision; to deepen and broaden the demographics of audience members and supporters; and to continue the work of identifying, nurturing, and empowering talented artists, artisans, and administrators who will expand the art form and who will contribute to an even brighter future for opera audiences in St. Louis, across the country, and throughout the world.

The Position

Reporting to the General Director and working in collaboration with Opera Theatre’s executive leadership team, the Artistic Director takes a principal role in **shaping the long-term artistic direction of the company**. With the General Director, the Artistic Director **ensures the highest possible standards of artistic excellence are consistently reflected** in all the company’s year-round activities, including Festival Season productions and performances, education programs, community programs, and special events throughout the year. The Artistic Director **fosters a safe and nurturing environment** that allows all artists to develop their full potential and to do their best work.

The Artistic Director works closely with the Artistic Leadership Team (comprised of the Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs, the Principal Conductor, the Director of Artistic Administration, and the Director of Production & Operations) as well as with the rest of the

executive leadership team to oversee and guide the development of the company's artistic profile. The Artistic Director leads repertory planning for the Festival Season and for all the principal performing activities of the company. The Artistic Director plays an active role in all production matters, including the selection of stage directors, designers, assistant stage directors, and stage managers. The Artistic Director reviews production concepts, collaborating with guest directors and designers and with Directors of Artistic Administration and Production & Operations and their teams to bring visionary projects to the stage within logistical and budgetary constraints. The Artistic Director collaborates with the Artistic Leadership Team on the selection of singers and on all other aspects of the company's artistic activities.

The Artistic Director may be a working artist, with additional professional commitments beyond working with Opera Theatre, allowing them to stay connected to the broader field. While St. Louis need not be the Artistic Director's primary place of residence, they are expected to be an active and visible member of the St. Louis community throughout the year. The Artistic Director is expected to be in St. Louis full-time during the rehearsals and performances of the Festival Season (in 2025, from mid-April to early July). In addition, the Artistic Director will be available for no fewer than eight weeks between August and April for company functions in St. Louis and elsewhere, including but not limited to auditions, design review sessions, production meetings, fundraising and entertaining, and press events.

Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate will be a **creative and energetic artistic leader who enjoys an outstanding reputation in the opera field**. The Artistic Director will **embrace Opera Theatre's vision and values and will welcome the opportunity to collaborate** with the General Director and with OTSL's dedicated annual and seasonal staff teams in achieving the company's mission. The candidate will be **fully committed to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion** and will work to advance the company's EDI plan. The candidate will have a **strong interest in and creative ideas for developing artistic partnerships** that expand the reach of OTSL within the greater St. Louis community as well as across the international opera landscape.

The successful candidate will be prepared to guide Opera Theatre in artistic programming that can both advance an appreciation of the classical canon and push the boundaries of the art form. The candidate will have a **thorough knowledge of opera and music, with an interest in the full range of opera repertory, including commissioning and presenting new work**, and developing successful co-production relationships. The successful candidate will have a resumé that demonstrates a personal commitment to identifying, engaging, and mentoring the next generation of artists and artisans: singers, creative artists, stage directors, etc.

The successful candidate will have excellent leadership and management skills. The candidate will be **able to inspire, motivate, and support a high-performing professional staff**, and to successfully engage with board leadership, to achieve shared goals for the company's success. The candidate will be a **collaborator who fosters teamwork**, encourages the open exchange of ideas, welcomes feedback, and readily acknowledges the contributions of all team members. The candidate will **embrace budget and logistical guidelines, creative solutions, ingenuity, and continuous learning**.

The successful candidate will have the vision to elevate OTSL's profile as a leader in opera, both nationally and internationally. The candidate will also help strengthen OTSL's profile within the St. Louis community by being a visible participant in community activities and engaging with area artists, educators, and cultural leaders. The candidate will take an active role as **a champion and spokesperson for the company**, participating as requested in fundraising, public relations, and audience development.

The successful candidate will be a person of integrity, maturity, and high ethical standards. The candidate will be creative, decisive, empathetic, and kind. The successful candidate will welcome the opportunity to be part of the leadership team that envisions and executes the artistic plan that sets the tone for OTSL's next fifty years.

Compensation

The salary range for this position is \$120,000 to \$140,000 per year, depending on qualifications and experience. As an employee of OTSL, the Artistic Director will also be eligible for a robust benefits package including health care coverage and a 401k contribution match. The Artistic Director may serve in a separate but concurrent role for a specific production – e.g. as a stage director, conductor, designer, performer, etc. Compensation for this specific work will be negotiated and contracted separately, as applicable.

Applications

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis values equity, diversity, and mutual respect. OTSL strongly encourage people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, people with disabilities, and others who have been historically excluded to apply. The company aspires to create a diverse workforce that is representative of the vibrant Saint Louis community and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees.

OTSL will not discriminate against employees or applicants on the basis of race, color, religion or belief; national, social, or ethnic origin; age; sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression; physical, mental, or sensory disability; family or parental status; genetic information or characteristics; protected veteran status; or any other protected class under federal, state, or local law. OTSL will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any of these characteristics.

If you need assistance or an accommodation in completing an application, interviewing, or otherwise participating in the employee selection process, please contact Christopher Wingert at cwingert@catherinefrenchgroup.com.

Please submit a cover letter that describes your specific interest in Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and your qualifications for the position. Send with a resumé. On a separate sheet, please also include the names of several professional references. All applications will be treated as confidential, and references will not be contacted without the applicant's agreement. Electronic submissions are requested.

Please send materials to:

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis – Artistic Director
c/o Catherine French Group
2500 Q Street, NW, Suite 623
Washington, DC 20007
applications@catherinefrenchgroup.com

MS Word or Adobe Acrobat attachments only, please

The position will remain open until filled. A review of credentials will begin in early February 2025.

Attached: Appendix A

Appendix A

About Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis was founded in the spring of 1976 by the visionary opera impresario Richard Gaddes, who became the company's first General Director, and a small group of opera lovers determined to bring world-class opera to the St. Louis area. With a budget of \$135,000, they presented an 11-performance season of familiar and unconventional operas. The company has grown significantly in the past 49 years, but its dedication to high-quality productions of a varied repertory, sung in English by established and emerging artists, and performed with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra continues to this day. In 2006, the company built the Sally S. Levy Opera Center, which provided the first unified home for the administrative staff and the company's rehearsal facilities.

Opera Theatre has a long tradition of promoting the work of living American librettists and composers. Internationally recognized as a leader for developing new work, Opera Theatre has presented 43 world premieres and 27 American premieres to date, perhaps the highest percentage of new works in the repertory of any American opera company. World premieres include Terance Blanchard's *Champion* and *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Ricky Ian Gordon's *27*, and Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier*.

OTSL is also known for its record of discovering and training the finest rising stars. Each year, more than 1,000 aspiring singers apply to join the Gerdine Young Artist and Gaddes Festival Artist Programs and fewer than 40 are accepted. These emerging artists receive the opportunity to learn from world-renowned teaching artists during a series of master classes, in addition to regular dramatic and vocal training led by Artistic Director of Young Artist Programs Patricia Racette. The annual roster of the Metropolitan Opera regularly includes as many as 60 artists who came to Opera Theatre early in their careers, artists including Jamie Barton, Larry Brownlee, Vinson Cole, Christine Goerke, Susan Graham, Denyce Graves, Thomas Hampson, Patricia Racette, Morris Robinson, and many others. Just as early career artists are launched through the Young Artist Programs, backstage talent is similarly developed through programs including the Emerson Behind the Curtain Program and the Larry & Jinny Browning Technical Fellowships. The company's extensive year-round live and digital education programs annually reach more than 100,000 young people across all 50 states, more than a dozen countries, and in every zip code in the St. Louis metro area.

The 2025 Festival Season opens on May 24th with Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*. The season includes the company's 44th world premiere, *This House*, with music by Ricky Ian Gordon and libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winner Lynn Nottage and her daughter Ruby Aiyo Gerber; an all-new staging of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, the very first opera that OTSL ever performed; and Britten's enchanting adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In addition to four mainstage productions, the company will present two concerts: *Our Songs*, a community event featuring a different guest artist curator every year, and the annual *Center Stage* showcase,

which shines a spotlight on the members of OTSL's Young Artist Programs in concert with members of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Opera Theatre's celebration of its 50th anniversary will continue beyond the 2025 Festival Season with a year of programming that will highlight the invaluable community partnerships that have been key to OTSL's success. The company's long list of collaborators includes not only other regional arts leaders (such as the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Jazz St. Louis, St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, Saint Louis Dance Theatre, Saint Louis Art Museum, and Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis) but also a wide range of civic institutions that contribute to the vitality of Saint Louis (including Webster University, Arts & Faith St. Louis, OCA St. Louis Chapter, Washington University, the Urban League, the Diversity Awareness Partnership, and Missouri History Museum).