Position Specification

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc.

Eunice and Julian Cohen President and Chief Executive Officer
Our Client

Founded in 1881, the Boston Symphony Orchestra is a world-renowned symphonic organization; one of the largest in the country. Comprised of approximately 100 players, the orchestra is now led by the internationally acclaimed conductor Andris Nelsons, who became the 15th music director of the BSO in the 2014-15 season. Named Musical America’s 2018 Artist of the Year, Andris Nelsons has re-established the orchestra’s international touring tradition, led the orchestra in a multiple Grammy award-winning cycle of the symphonies of Shostakovich, and created a unique partnership between the BSO and the historic Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, where he also serves as music director. The BSO’s yearly schedule of major activities includes a subscription season at Symphony Hall (September–April) and a summer season at Tanglewood (July–August), as well as concerts by the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall during the spring (May–June) and the holiday season, under the direction of Keith Lockhart.

The BSO celebrates its 139th year with a commitment to maintaining the dream of “orchestral mastery” of its founder, Henry Lee Higginson. Yet as the organization looks forward, the BSO is eager to embrace its future as the art form evolves in the context of a changing world and new opportunities. This generational leadership transition comes at a time of significant disruption for performing arts organizations worldwide. The BSO seeks a transformational leader who will bring the executive skills to manage its complexity and scale with discipline and transparency, as well as the visionary, collaborative, and creative orientation to lead the BSO into its future.

The Opportunity

Under Mark Volpe’s leadership the BSO has accomplished substantial artistic, programmatic, and institutional growth and achievement. The BSO has a great heritage and, at the same time, the opportunity for evolution is significant. The role of music and of symphony orchestras in society is changing, and the BSO recognizes the need for investment in technology and media. These tools, in addition to a deepening commitment to local impact, will enable the BSO to reach out to and engage its communities in new ways, and to diversify its audiences as well as its internal teams and leadership.

The BSO and all arts institutions are called to introspection and action around issues of racism, social justice, and diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. Further, the organization is adapting in real-time in response to the global pandemic, managing the cascading consequences and impacts of COVID-19 in 2020 and navigating new outlooks for the future. The next CEO’s role will include the mandate of leading the organization forward as it responds to this period of change and opportunity.

The BSO – At a Glance

Considered a cultural treasure for the City of Boston, the Berkshire region, and throughout the world, the BSO provides a broad range of performance and community engagement through a number of artistic endeavors, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, and Tanglewood.

- **The Boston Symphony Orchestra:** The BSO’s home, Symphony Hall, is located in the heart of the city of Boston, with its renowned summer home, Tanglewood, nestled in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. Each year the orchestra performs over 470 concerts for a total live audience of 1.2 million people. Extending its impact, the BSO has performed for audiences all over the world in such cities as Beijing, Berlin, London, Paris, Seoul, Tokyo, and Vienna. It was the first American orchestra to perform in Russia (1956) and China, after the normalization of relations.
(1979). The orchestra maintains an active media presence as well, engaging 28 million individuals annually via the internet, radio, television, and recordings, as well as an expanding use of virtual and digital media. The BSO has earned eleven Grammy awards since 1959. At the local level, the BSO serves thousands of families and children annually with a myriad of education programs and community engagement including both youth and family concerts. The Boston Symphony Chamber Players—one of the world’s most distinguished chamber music ensembles sponsored by a major symphony orchestra and made up of principal players from that orchestra—presents an annual four-concert series at Jordan Hall. The all-volunteer Tanglewood Festival Chorus, under James Burton, performs with the BSO and Boston Pops at Symphony Hall, at Tanglewood, and occasionally on tour, and is universally acknowledged as among the world’s most accomplished choral ensembles. The Boston Symphony Orchestra Children’s Choir was established in 2018, under the direction of Mr. Burton.

▪ **The Boston Pops:** Founded in 1885, the Boston Pops, often described as “America’s Orchestra,” specializes in family-friendly performances of a wide range of music, from jazz to pop, indie rock to big band, film music to the great American songbook, and Broadway to classical. The Boston Pops performs a highly successful month-long series of holiday concerts and its longstanding tradition of spring concerts, along with regional, national and international tours. The Pops’ annual Fourth of July concert, televised from the Boston Esplanade, is viewed by millions and has become a cultural staple. During Keith Lockhart’s tenure (since 1995), the Pops has made 80 television shows, taken 45 national and four overseas tours, performed at several high-profile sports events including the Super Bowl, and renewed its commitment to bringing the orchestra to communities throughout New England and to participating in some of Boston’s most important civic events.

▪ **Symphony Hall:** Symphony Hall—a national historic landmark that seats more than 2,500 people—is regularly ranked as one of the finest concert halls in the world acoustically and includes a state-of-the-art recording studio. Symphony Hall is home to the BSO for its annual subscription series of concerts, and to the Boston Pops for its holiday and spring concerts. Symphony Hall is also used throughout the season for concerts and programs by outside presenters including the Celebrity Series, the Handel & Haydn Society, and The Boston Speaker Series. The BSO offers venue rentals of the auditorium and other spaces in Symphony Hall.

▪ **Tanglewood:** The 529-acre Tanglewood campus is home to a wide variety of events and activities every summer, drawing over 350,000 visitors annually. One of the world’s premier music festivals, Tanglewood offers not only orchestral programs by the BSO, but also a broad array of chamber music, opera, choral music, contemporary music, jazz, and concerts by popular artists. Each summer thousands of music lovers gather on the expansive lawn, in the iconic Koussevitzky Music Shed, or in award-winning Seiji Ozawa Hall to experience music and nature in perfect harmony.

The Tanglewood Music Center (“TMC”) is the BSO’s prestigious summer music academy, considered one of the most acclaimed training programs for musicians in the world. At the TMC, early-career professional-caliber musicians hone their skills under the tutelage of BSO players and other prominent guest artists. Fifty percent of BSO players serve as TMC faculty, and a significant portion of the BSO and of other US orchestras is made up of alumni of the program. Notable TMC graduates include Leonard Bernstein, Phyllis Curtin, Wynton Marsalis, Seiji Ozawa, Leontyne Price, and Zubin Mehta.
The Tanglewood Learning Institute (“TLI”)—an exciting new vision of programming that encourages active participation—opened in summer 2019, engaging new communities through a diverse mosaic of programs, voices, and visions. Welcoming audiences of all backgrounds and levels of musical knowledge, TLI’s programming includes performances by both conventional and unconventional artists, open rehearsals and master classes led by world-renowned musicians, themed weekends and programs dedicated to film, eye-opening discussions with noted biographers, civic leaders, and playwrights, and more. In the summer of 2019, the BSO inaugurated the all-season Linde Center for Music and Learning at Tanglewood. For the first time ever, the BSO presented year-round programming in the Berkshires, fall 2019 through spring 2020, using the Linde Center’s state-of-the-art spaces. Despite the interruption of normal operations caused by COVID-19, the Linde Center’s superb resources have enabled the BSO to record and transmit extensive and innovative programming worldwide through the Tanglewood 2020 Online Festival.

The BSO is one of the largest orchestral institutions in the world, with a FY20 operating budget of over $100 million, an endowment of $450 million, and a staff of over 1,300 (more than 200 of which are full-time). The BSO owns and operates all of its facilities and properties, including Symphony Hall, additional real estate adjacent to Symphony Hall, and 529 acres of buildings and grounds at Tanglewood.

The BSO is governed by a 42-person Board of Trustees, who have fiduciary responsibility for the organization and contribute leadership, expertise, and judgment in working to sustain and ensure the BSO’s place as a standard-bearer of excellence in orchestral music. The Board of Trustees is dedicated to an engaged, thoughtful partnership with the CEO, and has been proactive in evolving its role, structure, and composition to reflect best practices in governance. The organization also benefits from insight, ambassadorship, and support from its Life Trustees, Board of Advisors, and Advisors Emeriti, as well as an engaged group of volunteers. A strong sense of community and collegiality has been a hallmark of the BSO and is deeply appreciated among its constituents.

The Role

The President and Chief Executive Officer of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc. reports to the Board of Trustees and, in robust collaboration with the Board, serves as the driver of the BSO’s vision and strategic direction, as well as long-term planning and goal setting. The CEO is charged with overall internal leadership of the BSO, including senior team management, operational excellence, and financial sustainability. S/he also plays the primary role in representing the BSO externally to a wide variety of constituents and is most often the public face and spokesperson of the organization. The CEO serves as the BSO’s principal fundraiser, and forges strong external partnerships and collaborations.

Specific responsibilities of the CEO include:

- Leads the development and implementation of a compelling vision and a clear strategic plan, in collaboration with the Board of Trustees, artistic leadership, staff, and players.
- Leads strategic decision-making around key challenges and opportunities, including: reaching out to communities and embedding community in the DNA of the BSO; growing and diversifying audiences; increasing the base of support and diversifying revenue streams; driving innovation in technology and media; and overseeing the deployment of key assets, including real estate.
- Collaborates closely with artistic leadership, including around the creation of seasonal programs, cultivating a unique blend of perspectives at this senior level; encourages a particular fusion of
expertise, trust, and mutual respect among the CEO, the Music Director, and the Artistic Administrator, among others.

- Works closely with The Players Committee on behalf of the Orchestra, who are members of the American Federation of Musicians and perform under a collective bargaining agreement, as well as with the orchestra’s senior leadership on all aspects of orchestra management.

- Recruits, develops, delegates to, and leads an exceptional team, such that operations, capacity, and systems are strong; ensures that the right people are in the right roles with the bandwidth and expertise to take responsibility for their respective functions, and that they function highly as a team; creates a culture that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

- Works closely with senior management in finance to implement sound fiscal management and assure the financial sustainability of the BSO, including strong financial and operational systems and budgetary processes; makes decisions efficiently and communicates them with transparency.

- Leads extensive fundraising activity in partnership with senior management on the advancement team and with governance, as well as collaborations and partnerships, particularly as they relate to major gifts, support from foundations, corporations, individuals, and community engagement.

- Works collaboratively with Trustees in ensuring sound governance. A strong partnership with the Board around direction-setting is key.

**Candidate Profile**

The Boston Symphony Orchestra seeks an inspiring and collaborative leader who can convey a vision of impact for the future, create a clear strategy for the path ahead, and build and lead an outstanding team. The BSO intends to be a leader of the change taking place in its art form, its communities, and its global audiences. The CEO must be a passionate advocate for the power of orchestral music, diversity on the stage and off, and connection to communities and the broader world.

The ideal candidate is an accomplished leader of complex organizations. The candidate may bring different backgrounds and experiences, including having served in a leadership role in the arts, business, academia, the broader nonprofit community, or government.

The candidate must possess substantial domain knowledge of and passion for orchestral music. S/he will bring a respect for and willingness to continue the BSO’s storied history of being at the forefront of developments in classical music.

In terms of the specific competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

**Vision**

- Able to create and articulate an inspiring and inclusive vision for the BSO; a creative thinker with an approach to developing new ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries of the field, with a track record of leading transformation in his/her organization.

- Sees a path forward to evolve operations and impact; understands and appreciates the need for innovation and investment in technology and new media, broader and more inclusive community engagement, audience diversification, and financial sustainability, among other priorities.
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Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc.

Strategy
- Possesses the executive skills to take the BSO forward during a time of great change and lead a comprehensive strategic planning process, in close partnership with governance; sets clear priorities and makes difficult decisions with transparency; listens, seeks data from a variety of sources to support decisions.
- Track record of strong fiscal and strategic discipline and outcomes; results-oriented, thoughtful, and courageous; will take calculated risks and use resources creatively in terms of innovation while demonstrating pragmatism with respect to both expenses and revenues.

Leadership
- Recruits and develops top talent, delegates effectively, and manages performance with accountability; widely viewed as a leader who develops others, and who trusts and leverages the expertise of staff; fosters a culture of collaboration, respect, and empowerment.
- Brings deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of the organization’s work; seeks to build an organization that is substantively diverse and reflective of the diversity of our community.
- Self-reflective and aware of his/her own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and personal development; encourages others to share the spotlight, and celebrates the success of the team.

Collaboration & Building Relationships
- Enthusiastic fundraiser, who proactively builds philanthropic relationships and enjoys making the case for support; track record of expanding his/her organization’s fundraising base and collaborating with others to raise significant funds; a credible ambassador who can build partnerships externally with important constituencies.
- Able to actively bring the BSO into the community, and new communities into the BSO; reaches out to and draws in the world in new and more inclusive ways, with commitment to underserved communities.
- Able to communicate superbly and inspire trust through both powerful charisma and humility; demonstrates strong emotional intelligence.

Versatility & Nimbleness
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, and able to adapt quickly and flexibly to unforeseen challenges and lead others through complex situations; capable of flexing between practical and operational problem solving and long-term strategy.
- Takes smart risks, seeking data and input from others to foresee possible unintended consequences of decisions; exhibits resolve and commitment to standards of excellence and impact internally and externally.

Interpersonal Skills & Acumen
- Sees this role as a calling as much as a job; highest degree of personal and professional integrity.
- Confidence and gravitas, as well as self-awareness and humility; possesses strong empathy, a keen sense of humor, and kindness; makes others feel welcome and at ease.
Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search. All correspondence related to the opportunity is completely confidential.

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The Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc., is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.

Appendix A – More about the Boston Symphony Orchestra

- Staff and Administration: https://www.bso.org/brands/bso/about-us/staff-administration.aspx
- BSO Board: https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3Aabaffe1b-8e88-4f9d-906b-f9f0fb68240d#pageNum=1
- Tanglewood Learning Institute: https://www.tli.org/