

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS, INC.

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<p>POSITION PROFILE WESTON PLAYHOUSE EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR WESTON, VT</p>

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Weston Playhouse Theatre (Weston) is Vermont's oldest continually producing professional theatre, its roots stretching back to an auspicious start in the midst of the Great Depression. For over 80 years, Weston has satisfied the appetites of regional audiences by creating life-affirming dramatic and musical productions performed by established and emerging theatre artists. Weston is governed by a strong and devoted Board of Directors connected to the greater Weston community and beyond and is supported by talented artists, artisans, and administrators who all make Weston, Vermont a magical place for inspiration and entertainment. Today the company is highly regarded by audiences and artists for producing at a consistently high level and staking its claim as an important institutional force in the development of new theatrical work.

Weston-born architect Raymond Austin created the original Weston Playhouse in 1935 by renovating a former church in the center of town for use by the local dramatic society. In 1937 the theatre debuted its first summer stock season led by director Harlan Grant, featuring a then unknown young actor by the name of Lloyd Bridges. Other talents such as film and television star, Christopher Lloyd, and Broadway scenic design legend John Lee Beatty would also go on to cut their teeth at Weston.

From the start, nurturing a special connection with the community has been a guiding principle for the company. Local supporters and the seasonal audiences who make the population of this bucolic Southern Vermont town swell during the summer months have shown their love of the Weston theatre through donations of money, time, talent, and steadfast patronage. The company's roster of plays, musicals, and treasured post-show cabarets have always and continue to delight and challenge audiences. Deeply embedded in the community, the theatre has risen time and again from setbacks such as fire and flood.

In 1988, with the for-profit summer stock model of theatre languishing, former Weston employees Malcolm Ewen, Tim Fort, and Steve Stettler took over operation of the company and reorganized it as a not-for-profit Equity theatre. Over 30 years, this triumvirate expanded the company's programming, increased its annual budget to its current level of \$2.6 Million, and established traditions and a culture of welcome and hospitality that have defined the company aesthetic. Stettler served as Producing Artistic Director and established himself as a permanent presence as the company's full-time, year-round leader based in Weston. Ewen and Fort focused their energies on the immediate needs of summer theatre production while maintaining their own prominent careers in theatre elsewhere (Mr. Ewen is a stage manager for Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, and Mr. Fort is Graduate Coordinator for the new Arts Management program at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.) After their three-decade run, the trio of leaders has announced their retirement from Weston at the end of the 2018 season.

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Specializing in Executive Search, Planning and Organizational Analysis

The company's primary artistic output has focused around performances at the 300-seat historic Greek revival theatre and gathering space on the Weston Village Green. For the past 17 years, the addition of a second stage performance series in found spaces has been used to expand the palette of artistic exploration to introduce work better served by a more intimate or flexible space. Since 2003, performances for these second stage productions have taken place at the rustically charming, if not ideally outfitted, Weston Rod and Gun Club. In 2017, nearly 23,000 patrons attended performances of Weston's full season of plays, musicals, cabarets, and special presentations.

Spurred on by a desire to have more control over a dedicated performance space for producing plays and musicals to expand the Weston vision and develop new works and education programs, the company constructed the new 2,600 square foot arts and community center, Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm. This new state-of-the-art building opened its doors in the fall of 2017 and boasts a flexible performance space allowing seating for up to 140 patrons, dedicated areas for reception and gathering, and audio/visual resources that make it attractive for greater community use. The new space was created as part of a continuing \$13.5 Million capital campaign which is planned to close in June of 2018. Three village farmhouses, including artist housing, offices, rehearsal space, and a costume shop, round out Weston's current real estate holdings. Weston's mainstage performances still take place at the historic Playhouse through a long-term lease with the local non-profit that owns and maintains that structure. The first season of Weston's second stage performances at Walker Farm debuts during the 2018 season.

Weston has made great in-roads in new play development with world premieres, artist retreats, a new works festival, and the Weston New Musical Award as part of the organization's yearly programs. A deep commitment to education is evident in programs for children, early career artists who serve as interns, apprentices, fellows, and members of its Young Company, and lifelong learners who are looking for new ways to connect with and be inspired by live theatre.

The Weston Playhouse Theatre is truly a shining jewel in a Southern Vermont town with a year-round population of fewer than 600 people that sits in a region heavily supported economically by tourism and the "second-home" housing market. The Weston story is one of perseverance, thinking beyond expectation, and capturing lightning in a bottle by curating an experience predicated on great warmth, heart, and elation. After three decades of dedicated leadership from a team grounded in a real love for theatre and the Weston community, the company has come to an important moment in its continuing story where new leadership can leap at opportunities with the confidence that the theatre has solid footing rooted in a rich history of achievement.

More information on Weston's history and programming can be found on its website at <http://www.westonplayhouse.org/>.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

After 30 years of leadership, the troika of Malcolm Ewen, Tim Fort, and Steve Stettler has decided to pass the torch to a new leader. The Board of Directors of the Weston Playhouse Theatre acknowledges that replacing these three stalwarts is a formidable task on both an organizational and emotional level. In response to this collective shift in how Weston has operated under a unique leadership model, the Board of Directors has recast the new leadership role to offer the Executive Artistic Director the opportunity to chart his or her own course and continue to build a staffing structure which is responsive to Weston's current and future needs. This new leader will also fully embrace what has worked extremely well under

Weston's current leadership—a tireless commitment to building an environment of genuine trust, familiarity and personal connection to staff, artists, donors, patrons, Board and the people of the greater Weston community. The Executive Artistic Director will be able to build upon the great success of the past while conceiving new plans to further Weston's reputation as a much-admired regional player in the professional theatre world.

Weston's primary public activities take place during the height of the summer and fall tourist season, a time when the area's population soars as second-home owners make their summer residence in Vermont. Weston's three-stage season of plays, musicals, and cabarets runs from June-October, though with the addition of Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm, the company now has the opportunity to have a year-round presence with a combination of community activities, artistic projects, and developmental programs, the first of which will be tested in 2018. The new Executive Artistic Director will come into a thriving environment where artistic quality is at an all-time high and where the chance for further growth is real.

At the same time, some clear opportunities for shaping the future are front-and-center for this new leader to address. Organizing and completing a high functioning staff that responds to the current administrative and production needs of the company will be a priority. Clearly articulating and setting comprehensive plans for Weston's new state-of-the-art second stage at Walker Farm will be a critical component of this new leader's focus, one that necessarily combines the dual goals of artistic invention and facility sustainability. Enriching current ties and cultivating new regional and national networks in a sophisticated and organized manner is an opportunity that Weston's new leader can take and run with in new and exciting ways. Reporting directly to the Weston Playhouse Theatre's Board of Directors, the Executive Artistic Director will serve as the undisputed organizational leader and is given the exciting chance to continue to refine a support system that actively satisfies the essential functions of running a theatre company of Weston's size and aspirations.

EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The Executive Artistic Director will serve as a classic artist manager, an impresario with a flair for bringing together resources, ideas, and people time and again to make audiences lean forward and be stunned by rapturous, surprising, accessible, and immediate live performances. The ideal candidate will approach this opportunity as an inspiring leader heading up a great adventure; someone who adores navigating twists and turns but has learned through experience that the only way to have a really successful journey is by taking the time to put together a meticulously detailed map. As a visionary dreamer, this person will not be interested in a solo journey, but instead one that starts with a dedicated team and gains strength along the way with the addition of new participants who will share the load, expand horizons, and rally in the face of challenges. The Executive Artistic Director will set all programming for the theatre company in deep collaboration with a trusted team of devoted professionals with a shared vision for Weston's future. As the leader of the organization, the Executive Artistic Director will energize, motivate and spearhead institutional fundraising, strengthen organizational capacity, pursue aggressive entrepreneurial ideas, and strategically align Weston's real and perceived assets with the same level of joy and wonder as he or she has in thinking about what next great play or musical to produce. This chosen individual will shape the company's artistic vision by building upon a storied history of invention and hospitable celebration to imagine even deeper and richer ways to connect hearts, minds and funding to the Weston experience while it becomes a greater part of the surrounding region's lifeblood and the nation's professional theatre scene.

POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Artistic Director will be responsible for planning and executing all of the Weston Playhouse Theatre's programs and events through oversight and mentorship. Simultaneously, she or he will develop reliable and sustainable strategies to leverage Weston's assets (real estate, reputation, and relevance to the region) to define a new era of ballyhooed programming, expansive artistic exploration, and grounded community connectivity. The Executive Artistic Director will cultivate a deep pool of great artists and administrators, actively tending to an ever-expanding personal network with obvious dignity, integrity, and character. He or she will use that same passion for connecting the right people to the right projects to expand Weston's donor pool in collaboration with the company's dedicated Board of Directors and staff. The Executive Artistic Director will be a true person of the theatre, a knowledgeable and talented practitioner who skillfully guides his or her cohort into the spotlight when it's their time to shine. For the Executive Artistic Director, putting on a great performance will be all in a day's work, but putting together a great company will be a real life commitment.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive Leadership

- Develop a new era of ever increasing professionalism to celebrate the organization's evolving philosophy, mission, vision, energy, and verve.
- Lead a team with humor, wit, confidence, and authentic respect for individuals, nurturing a treasured culture of warmth and positivity fiercely protected by Weston's supporters and artists.
- Establish and nourish a great working relationship built on trust and accountability with Weston's Board of Directors, staff, artists, and volunteers.
- Create systems and practices to measure, monitor, and improve upon the effectiveness of Weston's programming and operations.
- Set clear expectations for those working with the company that honor hard work, constantly striving to improve upon past successes while learning from missteps.
- Guide the annual organizational budgeting process, understanding all details of operational need and potential.
- Operate Weston with fiscal rigor and prudence so as to achieve revenue and expenditure goals set forth in the annual budget approved by the Board of Directors.
- Value and recognize contributions (time, wealth, ideas, etc.) made by all stakeholders by encouraging creativity and the free sharing of ideas.
- Ensure that a strategic approach to identifying new artistic and funding resources are front-and-center in all organizational planning and discussions.
- Optimistically energize staff, Board, and community to contribute their talents and resources.

Programming and Education

- Define Weston's artistic vision and direction through a deep understanding of how the company can uniquely serve the needs of the region.
- Maintain a thriving and diverse network of today's best working artists to draw upon for Weston's productions and programs.
- Develop programs that command significant interest for their high level of artistry and welcoming attitude to audiences.

- Oversee and participate in selecting, hiring, and mentoring professional actors, directors, designers, artistic/production staff, and educators.
- Create an atmosphere and infrastructure where young artists can learn from the best in the field and perform at their peak potential and where seasoned artists are reinvigorated by new lessons gained from early career talent.
- Show a dedicated commitment to education in new and creative ways by seeking out artists to execute innovative outreach and lifelong learning experiences.
- Foster the growth of Weston as a home for new works exploration and development by embracing a team of professionals skilled in those areas.
- Celebrate his or her love of theatre by producing live performances with a public sense of elation.

Fundraising, Administration, and Strategy

- Develop and achieve balanced annual operating budgets in collaboration with staff and Board.
- Fully participate in institutional fundraising by leading the charge for support in collaboration with Weston's Board of Directors and development staff.
- Detail an actionable plan for using Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm as a hub for artistic and social activity and new revenue growth.
- Assemble and propel a high-functioning development team to establish and succeed in hitting aspirational goals.
- Create a staffing infrastructure that makes achieving annual fundraising, sales, and attendance goals possible without staff burnout.
- Be a key player, engaging and identifying funders and key influencers.
- Forge effective, collaborative, transparent working relationships that can advance Weston's mission and develop deeper ties to the region in which it operates.

Communication and Marketing

- Charismatically act as Weston Playhouse Theatre's chief spokesperson.
- Build an atmosphere and team for innovative marketing approaches that accurately convey Weston's spirit.
- Manage expectations of all employees, contractors, and specialized firms dedicated to providing marketing support.
- Assure that brand identity is cohesive and appropriate.
- Regularly assess sales/marketing programs and plans and revise when needed.
- Communicate all messaging and marketing approaches to Board and staff in advance of their implementation and execution.

QUALIFICATIONS

Weston Playhouse Theatre is an equal opportunity employer that does not discriminate in its hiring practices and, in order to build the strongest possible workforce, actively seeks a diverse applicant pool. The ideal candidate will have the following:

- Deep personal contacts among theatre artists; a sense of artistic gravitas rooted in professional experience.
- Substantial artistic and managerial experience in conceiving and producing live theatrical events.
- Demonstrated experience working with budgets, finance, and organizational planning.
- Proven track record of high-level participation in fundraising and support activities appropriate to past organizational accomplishment.

- Collaborative, transparent, team-oriented approach to work.
- Ability to multi-task and respond swiftly and under pressure in a fast-paced environment.
- Strong writing and communication skills.
- Talent for mobilizing a team of professional staff and volunteers with an assured and inclusive sense of purpose.
- Excellent facility for communicating opportunities and challenges in a manner that drives an organization forward with zeal and determination.

The ideal candidate will also possess the following characteristics:

- A positive attitude.
- A strong attention to detail.
- A boundless sense of humor.
- A strong work ethic and authentic sense of grit.
- Ability to derive deep satisfaction from facilitating the best work of others.
- A desire to become grounded in Weston, VT and the surrounding region either through residency or a creative approach to effectively building strong community ties.

Compensation, Application Procedure and Start Date

The salary and benefit package for this position will be competitive with other non-profit theatres of comparable stature and size.

Weston Playhouse Theatre hopes to make its decision by May of 2018 with the successful candidate onsite for the summer 2018 Weston Playhouse Season. Interested candidates are invited to send a résumé or CV, cover letter, and at least three professional references to the consulting firm retained to facilitate this important search:

Management Consultants for the Arts, Inc.
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