

# MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

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EXECUTIVE SEARCH • PLANNING • ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

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## POSITION PROFILE

**Artistic Director**

**Alabama Shakespeare Festival  
Montgomery, AL**

### OPPORTUNITY

Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) seeks an inspiring, collaborative, and engaging Artistic Director to help guide its next chapter. A leader whose passions include artistic excellence, openness to new people and ideas, and a strong desire to connect with and serve ASF's many communities will help this important organization continue to thrive. This position reports directly to the Board of Directors and serves as the company's co-leader, working in close collaboration with the Executive Director. As the "State Theatre of Alabama" and one of the largest producing theatres in the Southeast, ASF plays an important role as a major contributor to the cultural and educational fabric and civic life of Montgomery, the state, and the wider region.

### BACKGROUND

From its founding in a high school auditorium in Anniston, AL in 1972 to its designation as the State Theatre of Alabama in 1977 to the construction of its stunning \$21.5 million performing arts complex in Montgomery in 1985, ASF has been a leader in the performing arts throughout the state, region, and country. As a beloved Alabama arts institution, ASF broadens the cultural identity of the South by producing classics, Shakespeare, contemporary plays, musicals, theatre for young audiences, and exciting new works. Since its inception, ASF has provided education programs to more than one million students. SchoolFest, its signature program, presents high-quality theatrical experiences to nearly 20,000 students annually.

ASF's [mission](#) is to "build community by engaging, entertaining, and inspiring people with transformative theatrical performances and compelling educational and community programs." It is guided by values of Heritage, Excellence, Community, Accessibility, Life-long Learning, Stewardship, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

### Current Environment

ASF currently operates on an annual budget of approximately \$8.5 million, which supports a full-time staff of 35 and 60 seasonal and project-specific employees. As a LORT member, ASF operates under AEA, SDC, and other union collective bargaining agreements. In addition to its yearly operating budget, ASF also undertakes endowment, capital, and other project-specific

fundraising. The endowment currently stands at approximately \$15 million, with an effort underway to increase the fund to \$20 million by 2025. The ASF Endowment Trust owns the theatre building complex as well as approximately 40 acres of land on which it is located.

ASF presents its work in a two-theatre complex located in the 300-acre Blount Cultural Park on the southeast side of Montgomery. Designed in the Palladian style by Thomas A. Blount and Perry Pitman, on land donated by business owner and philanthropist Wynton “Red” Blount, the 100,000 square foot building houses two stages - the 750-seat Festival Stage and the 250-seat Octagon Stage - as well as administrative offices, extensive rehearsal facilities, and well-equipped production shops. A Shakespeare Garden and outdoor performance space plus rolling parkland complete the facilities.

### Programming

ASF’s season features between six and eight productions annually, and serves approximately 40,000 audience members each year. ASF continues to honor its founding commitment by producing Shakespeare plays each year (generally one or two), and has significantly expanded offerings as well, which include an engaging slate of contemporary and classic plays and musicals that speak to a wide variety of audiences and the region. ASF strives to present a diversity of stories, rendered with high-quality artistry, that entertain, engage, uplift, and build community among its audiences. A handful of recent productions include *Cabaret*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Clyde’s*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *The Tempest*, *Blues in the Night* and *A Christmas Carol*.

ASF’s Southern Writers Festival (SWF) commissions, develops, and produces new plays by Southern playwrights; it expands the Southern theatre canon with stories steeped in specificity and reflective of the diversity of the region. In 2019, ASF announced plans to commission 22 new plays about transformative moments in the South, and is currently working on commissions with playwrights Mansa Ra, Robert Schenkkan, Lauren Gunderson, and Donnetta Lavinia Grays. SWF also provides a week-long opportunity for selected playwrights to develop work with a director and cast, culminating in a public reading. Recent participants include Jonathan Norton, Audrey Cefaly, Malcolm Tariq, Lee Osorio, Steve Yockey, Sandra Seaton, and Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder (whose *Zelda in the Backyard* was developed in the festival and appears as part of ASF’s 2023-24 Season). Of the 100+ plays developed by the SWF, several have gone on to notable national and international productions, including *Gee’s Bend*, *A Lesson Before Dying*, and *Alabama Story*.

### Education

Robust educational programming is central to ASF’s mission: it introduces young people and adults alike to the magical world of live theatre and invites participants to experience new worlds, with an emphasis in southern theatre and Shakespeare. Programs include:

- SchoolFest - ASF’s popular student-matinee program provides curricular-based arts education, study guides, dedicated performances, and post-show feedback sessions for approximately 20,000 students each year.
- The Fall Festival of Shakespeare - in partnership with Montgomery Public Schools, ASF pairs

Teaching Artists with students over nine weeks to rehearse a Shakespeare play and teach Master Classes on such topics as stage combat, character development and improvisation; the students then perform their selected play at ASF for the public. The program began in 2022 by serving one school and has expanded to three schools in 2024.

- Young Southern Writers Project - led by a professional playwright, students learn about writing dialogue, developing characters and plotting a story arc while writing their own one-act play. The students also attend the Southern Writers Festival workshops, rehearsals, and readings.
- Internships - in partnership with Alabama State University, ASF offers internships and other training opportunities in technical/design/production areas.
- Camps - school-year and summer camps and classes round out ASF's offerings and teach a variety of subjects, from dramatic play for younger children, through acting, stage combat, technical theatre, music and dance for middle and high schoolers.

### Leadership

ASF is governed by a 49-member Board of Directors and a 17-member Executive Committee, who represent a wide variety of civic, business, and philanthropic leaders within the region. The Honorable Vanzetta Penn McPherson serves as Chair.

Executive Director Todd Schmidt joined ASF in 2018 and oversees administration, operations, and revenue generation for the organization, collaborating with the Artistic Director on strategic direction and other key leadership areas. He and the Artistic Director serve as co-leaders of ASF and both report directly to the board. A native of Alabama, Schmidt has served as the managing leader of several celebrated national theatres, including as Managing Director of Paper Mill Playhouse when it won the Regional Theatre Tony Award in 2016.

### About Montgomery

Montgomery is the capital city of Alabama and home to just over 200,000 people, with nearly 400,000 in the Montgomery Metropolitan Area (MMA). The five largest ethnic groups in the MMA are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (45.6%), White (Non-Hispanic) (45.4%), Hispanic or Latino (3.6%), Mixed Race/Multiracial (Non-Hispanic) (2.9%), and Asian (Non-Hispanic) (2.3%). (Source: [censusreporter.org](https://www.censusreporter.org))

Known as the "Birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement," Montgomery is home to the Equal Justice Initiative and its celebrated Legacy Sites: The Legacy Museum, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, which, in EJI's words, "invite visitors to reckon with our history of racial injustice in places where that history was lived." The arts and cultural community includes the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts (which shares Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park with ASF) as well as the Montgomery Zoo, Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, Alabama Dance Theater, Montgomery Ballet, Montgomery Performing Arts Center, and the F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum.

The city is served by the Montgomery Regional Airport and is an easy drive to Birmingham, Atlanta,

and the Gulf Coast. New Orleans, Nashville, and other regional cities are also within driving distance. Alabama State University, Auburn University at Montgomery, Troy University, Huntingdon College and Faulkner University offer robust graduate and undergraduate programs, and some of the largest employers include the Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Baptist Hospitals, and Hyundai, plus state and local governments. [Click here](#) for more information.

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The next Artistic Director will join the organization at a pivotal time. There are significant assets at ASF, built over its 50-year history, not least of which are ASF's extraordinary facilities. Among the opportunities for the next Artistic Director are these:

- Building on ASF's history and its prominent place as Alabama's flagship producing organization.
- Expanding the usage of all three of ASF's performance venues and ancillary spaces.
- Finding new and expanded partnerships, including the possibility of a second-city home that will enhance ASF's artistic ambitions.
- Building and nurturing ASF's strong governmental, business and philanthropic relationships.
- Furthering ASF's strong commitment to education and to programs that engage multiple generations of Montgomery residents.

Along with these opportunities, there are challenges the next Artistic Director must embrace in concert with the senior team and Board, including these:

- Finding the right balance of programming, partnerships, rentals and other activities to maximize productivity and revenue.
- Working closely with the Executive Director to find and expand new sources of revenue, with a particular focus on audience and other earned revenue streams.
- Providing collaborative leadership at a time when all producing companies are seeking balance between ambition and human and financial resources.

### **POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

These are the primary roles and responsibilities of the Artistic Director:

- Forge a productive and deep partnership with the Executive Director through which they inspire others by their example of collaboration.
- Set a strategic artistic course for ASF that aligns with the organization's mission, vision, and values and inspires audiences, donors, staff, and Board.
- Lead the season planning process, including the selection of the plays and musicals, and creative teams.
- Oversee season productions and work with creative teams to ensure a positive working collaboration with the production and artistic staff.
- Develop ideas for commissioning, developing, and producing new plays and musicals; engage with writing teams to create work of artistic excellence.
- Develop relationships with other regional theatres and commercial producers to explore

collaboration and opportunity for partnership.

- With the Executive Director, set and sustain a working culture that supports and inspires the best work of artists, artisans, and administrators.
- Hire, lead, and nurture the artistic and production team.
- Imbue and deepen ASF's values of EDI and anti-racism.
- Serve as a primary voice and ambassador of ASF.
- Work diligently with the Executive Director, senior staff, and Board to strengthen ASF's fiscal sustainability including support of fundraising activities.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND SPECIAL TRAITS**

While no single individual will likely possess all of these qualifications, the Search Committee will make their evaluation on the following criteria:

- Demonstrable talent as a highly creative theatre artist, with deep experience in both plays and musicals. While the Search Committee is open to candidates of other backgrounds, there is strong preference for an accomplished stage director.
- Exceptional producing skills and the ability to inspire teams of designers and artisans with experience in productions at scale.
- Effectiveness in building efficient and productive teams through a positive working culture.
- Understanding of and experience with new work development.
- A strategic thinker relative to organizational vision and growth, able to effectively collaborate with the Executive Director and Board to achieve mutually agreed objectives.
- A positive, transparent and open leadership style.
- A demonstrable commitment to EDI and a desire to create an inclusive environment.
- Prior roles in nonprofit theatre environments.
- A dynamic public presence that will inspire the Board, staff, and patrons to support the theatre's artistic work and organizational vision.
- A desire to be fully engaged in and to be a part of the Montgomery community.

The following attributes are also important to the next Artistic Director's success in the role:

- Exceptional communication skills.
- Taking satisfaction in serving as an ambassador in business and social settings.
- Satisfaction in achieving the best work in others.
- Integrity, truthfulness, and ethics.
- A willingness to become fully rooted in the Montgomery community and an eagerness to discover the vibrancy of the region.

### **COMPENSATION AND START DATE**

The annual salary range for the Artistic Director starts at \$175,000 and includes a full benefit package including:

- Medical/dental/life/disability/vision insurance plans;
- A 403(b) plan available for employee funding with company match;

- Paid vacation, holidays, and sick leave.
- Travel budget.

ASF has engaged Management Consultants for the Arts to facilitate this search; David Mallette, President, and Thomas Pearson, Consultant, are leading the process. The hiring decision will be made by a search committee of ASF’s board and staff members. They hope to make a final decision by summer of 2024, with the new Artistic Director onsite as soon thereafter as possible.

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITMENT**

ASF’s dedication to promoting diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion is clearly reflected in the stories we tell and people we hire. Diversity is more than a commitment at ASF — it is the foundation of what we do. We are fully focused on equality and believe deeply in diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, and veteran status.

**ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL’S ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT**

ASF commits to anti-racism in its systems, practices, and theatre-making. As a storytelling institution charged with building community, we believe our civic, not-for-profit mission cannot be achieved with racist policies, ideals, or thinking in place. We commit to a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. We commit to combating discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and extend considerably beyond prejudice.

**HOW TO APPLY**

Interested and qualified candidates should submit the following items for consideration:

- A current resumé
- Cover letter (no more than 1 ½ pages)
- Four professional references
- Salary expectation

*All documents should have the candidate’s name as part of the file name.* Submissions should be made through Management Consultants for the Arts’s website at:

<https://www.mcaonline.com/searches/artistic-director-alabama-shakespeare>

**Management Consultants for the Arts, Inc**

[www.MCAonline.com](http://www.MCAonline.com)

Phone: 203-353-0722

Questions about this search may be submitted to [info@MCAonline.com](mailto:info@MCAonline.com)

With “ASF Artistic Director Search” in the subject line.