

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

EXECUTIVE SEARCH • PLANNING • ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

Kansas City Ballet

Kansas City, MO

OPPORTUNITY

Kansas City Ballet (KCB) seeks a strategic and visionary leader to co-lead one of America's longest-established professional ballet companies. As the organization's chief administrative leader, the next Executive Director will develop institutional resilience and drive team momentum for long-term success. Partnering with Artistic Director Devon Carney and the Board of Directors, the next Executive Director will champion bold entrepreneurial strategies to build resources, expand connections, and ensure KCB's continued artistic and operational growth.

BACKGROUND

Mission and Vision

Kansas City Ballet's Mission:

To Inspire and Engage Through the Beauty, Power & Passion of Dance

Kansas City Ballet's Vision:

Outstanding Dance Experiences Accessible to All

History

Founded in 1957 by Tatiana Dokoudovska, KCB has been led artistically by a series of creative and dedicated professionals. These include Todd Bolender, William Whitener, and since 2013, Devon Carney. Learn more about the organization's history [HERE](#).

Leadership

Board of Directors

Dedicated to the enduring legacy of Kansas City Ballet, the Board of Directors ensures the organization steadfastly fulfills its mission. Organizational leadership is shared between the Executive Director and Artistic Director, with both roles reporting to the

Board of Directors. KCB's 27-member Board includes business and community leaders, professionals, and philanthropists. Julia Irene Dennie-Kauffman is the long-serving chairman. Carolyn Parkerson is the current president.

Artistic Director

Devon Carney has served as KCB's Artistic Director since 2013. Mr. Carney brought to the organization a 21-year professional performing career, notably 12 years as a Principal Dancer with Boston Ballet. Subsequently, he held leadership roles as Ballet Master for Boston Ballet and Associate Artistic Director of Cincinnati Ballet. During his tenure at KCB, Mr. Carney has choreographed many works for the company including *Opus I*, *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Peter Pan*. He created a world-class *Nutcracker* that is performed annually in Kansas City and was performed at Washington DC's Kennedy Center in both 2017 and 2022 to exceptional reviews and sold-out houses. Learn more about Devon Carney [HERE](#).

Executive Director

Mr. Carney has worked in partnership with two KCB Executive Directors during his tenure. Jeffrey Bentley served with distinction for twenty-five years, retiring in 2023. David Gray is retiring from his role this year after a highly successful three-year tenure. Both leaders provided substantial contributions to KCB, each with unique backgrounds that served the organization in dynamic ways. Under Mr. Bentley's leadership, KCB expanded its efforts in education and grew financial resources, establishing the corpus of the enviable endowment KCB maintains today. Mr. Gray's contributions include successfully completing the most recent endowment fund campaign and building a management team defined by excellence, accountability, and collaboration throughout all levels of the organization.

Financial and Administrative

KCB currently operates on an annual budget of approximately \$12M with 71% of revenue coming from ticket sales, school tuition, and other revenue sources (including endowment income and a spending escrow), and 29% from contributed revenue. The organization's current endowment fund is approximately \$32M. KCB employs 38 full-time staff members.

Kansas City Ballet's Season

KCB's season generally includes a two-weekend Fall Performance, 25-30 performances of *The Nutcracker* during the holiday season, a two-weekend Winter Performance, a two-weekend Spring Performance, and a series of performances called *New Moves* in January/February. A *Family Series* production was added in 2025.

KCB's 2026-27 season will open in October 2026 with *The Wizard of Oz*. In addition to the company's annual performances of *The Nutcracker*, the season will feature *New Moves* in January 2027, *Romeo & Juliet* in March 2027, and an evening of mixed repertory (titled *Pulse*) in May 2027, with works by George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, and Melissa Hough. The third annual production of the *Family Series* in February 2027 will feature *Pinocchio*, a one-hour narrated work performed exclusively by KCB's Second Company.

Kansas City Ballet's Company and KCB II

There are 30 dancers in the professional company, represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) Union. Under Devon Carney's direction, the company dances in more than 50 performances per year. There are also 7-8 members of KCB II in addition to 18-23 Trainees, who collectively comprise the KCB Second Company.

Kansas City Ballet's School

Under the direction of School Director Oliver Till, [the KCB School](#) offers a complete, professional curriculum for its Academy students. With 2 locations and access to 11 studios, the School maintains a faculty of over 50 instructors, serving nearly 650 students as well as hundreds of teens and adults in Open Division classes. The School has recently cemented a partnership with the University of Missouri at Kansas City in which Trainees can receive partial college credit for their KCB dance classes. The School also hosts Summer Intensive training for aspiring young dancers, a Junior Summer Intensive for younger students and an immersive one-week Adult Summer Intensive for those who love dance without the pressure of professional expectations.

Kansas City Ballet's Partnerships Programs

KCB envisions a future where new generations of lifelong arts advocates and participants are inspired by a dedication to education, collaboration, inclusion, and innovation. Over 20,000 people throughout the region – from students to working professionals to retirees – benefit annually from KCB's community partnerships programs. Programs include workshops, interactive dance demonstrations, adult education, rehearsal watches, discounted and Sensory Friendly performances, Creative Aging classes, and the Reach Out and Dance (R.O.A.D.) Residency and Scholarship programs.

The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

KCB is the resident dance company of the [Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts](#) in downtown Kansas City – a dramatic, modern building designed by renowned international architect Moshe Safdie and one of the jewels of the Greater Kansas City area. KCB performs in the 1800 seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre in the Kauffman Center. The Center was born out of the vision of Muriel McBrien Kauffman, whose daughter,

Julia Irene Dennie-Kauffman, continues to guide the organization as a vital benefactor and long-serving Chairman of the Board.

The Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity

Located on the west edge of Kansas City's Union Station campus, the historic Power House building at Union Station was transformed into the [Todd Boldender Center for Dance and Creativity](#), opening in August 2011. The 60,000 square-foot Bolender Center includes seven studios, wardrobe and costume facilities, a physical therapy suite, and administrative offices. The Michael and Ginger Frost Studio Theater seats 180 and has rehearsal space the same size as the Muriel Kauffman Theatre stage at the Kauffman Center.

KANSAS CITY

With a population of over 2.2 million, Greater Kansas City is a lively, bi-state metropolis, straddling the Missouri-Kansas state line. Residents enjoy a low cost of living, a thriving economy, and excellent school systems. The region serves as the global headquarters for industry leaders such as AMC Theatres, Burns & McDonnell, Garmin, H&R Block, Hallmark, JE Dunn Construction, Lockton Companies, Seaboard Corp., and more.

Kansas City boasts a thriving arts scene, driven by a world-class lineup of performing and visual arts institutions. The city's cultural heartbeat is anchored by the Kansas City Ballet, Kansas City Symphony, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Acclaimed cultural centers include the American Jazz Museum, Negro League Baseball Museum, and Truman Presidential Library. Along with the internationally renowned Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the dynamic Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, the region offers a truly exceptional creative environment.

Kansas City's higher education landscape features the University of Missouri-Kansas City (a Carnegie R1 Research institution), Kansas City Art Institute, and robust suburban options such as Johnson County Community College (JCCC) and Park University.

Kansas City is a premier sports destination fueled by the Kansas City Chiefs (NFL), Kansas City Royals (MLB), Sporting KC (MLS), and the KC Current (NWSL). The city made international history in 2024 by opening CPKC Stadium—the first stadium in the world built specifically for a professional women's team.

From superb shopping and innumerable dining options to its world-famous Bar-B-Que and legendary blues and jazz clubs, Kansas City offers a vibrant, culture-rich

experience at every turn. More information on this exciting community can be found at www.visitkc.com.

THE FUTURE

KCB's next Executive Director will step into a thriving organization built on a strong financial foundation. Paired with the visionary artistic leadership and deep industry expertise of Artistic Director Devon Carney, the Executive Director will join a highly talented dance company, a dedicated administrative team, and a passionate Board of Directors. However, this stability does not mean KCB is seeking a steward of the status quo. As the organization looks to the future, several key focus areas emerge, such as:

- Taking a careful and considerate look at how to balance growth in revenue with an accelerated rise in the costs of producing world-class classical dance with deep community resonance.
- Addressing the needs of the Kansas City community in ways that are "of-the-moment" and speak to changes in how people relate to culture and performing arts.
- Bringing new audiences and supporters into the KCB experience without forgetting the value of nurturing long-time patron and donor relationships.
- In partnership with KCB's Artistic Director, finding new ways to expand the impact of KCB's educational arm, particularly as it relates to revenue generation.
- Nurturing existing partnerships and seeking new performance collaborations and co-production opportunities.
- Leveraging KCB's financial stability to take calculated risks around new initiatives that will extend and strengthen KCB's mission.

POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

KCB's Executive Director works in a co-leadership, collaborative relationship with the Artistic Director, both positions reporting to the Board of Directors. With a strategic planning process nearing completion, Kansas City Ballet's next Executive Director will be able to hit the ground running, fully owning the following key areas of responsibility:

Surefooted and Collaborative Leadership

- Leading by example, set the tone for achievement and accountability for top-level and highly collaborative performance across the organization.
- Inspire and empower a high performing team to individually understand their role in contributing to KCB's long-term success, establishing a goal-oriented culture where all team members are aware of the direction and intent of operational decisions.
- Forge a winning relationship with KCB's Artistic Director, one built on trust and respect in which the partnership thrives through shared ideas, healthy debate, and work towards a unified and balanced approach to organizational leadership.

- Collaborate with KCB's Board in its strategic focus to champion a culture of inclusion, resiliency, and innovation.
- Fully commit and add to KCB's history of strategic thought and plan development as a thought leader and convener.

Financial Insight and Planning

- Take a long arc approach to building budgets and financial plans that anticipate and address needs, both normal and extraordinary, so that KCB operates from a place of steadiness and solidity.
- Use numbers and facts as a compelling narrative to tell KCB's story to different constituencies, tailoring messaging on finance and budgetary matters in a manner that is motivating to different audiences.
- Evaluate financial processes in concert with KCB's finance team and make changes necessary to keep KCB well situated for growth, expansion, and change in financial tracking systems.
- Monitor performance of KCB's endowment fund with active advice and participation from KCB's Board of Directors to ensure maximum gains.
- Work with the leadership team of KCB's Ballet School to develop a framework that invests in improvements in education services and results in positive financial performance.

Fund and Audience Advancement

- As a compelling fundraiser, shape plans with KCB's philanthropy team, Board, and artistic partners to build strong cases for KCB support in the community.
- Enthusiastically nurture donor relationships, taking a personal approach to forming meaningful connections with supporters to show them how they can contribute to KCB's success.
- Encourage KCB's marketing and communications efforts to focus on well-considered growth in the areas of single tickets and subscriptions, boldly messaging KCB's programming in increasingly innovative and creative ways.

External Relationships and Values Reflection

- As a deeply embedded member of the community, maintain and establish important civic relationships that benefit KCB and the greater Kansas City cultural community.
- Bring KCB's message to a wider audience through an authentic and personal approach to relationship building locally, while at the same time, look beyond the Kansas City community to shine a light nationally on the organization's successes.
- Reflecting a personal commitment to values aligned with greater inclusion and access, be a leader in guarding a fierce dedication to KCB's equity-based values and celebration of diversity.

Additional Qualities of Compelling Candidates

- An expressed love of dance, either through a personal set of experiences or as a great appreciator of the art form.
- Strong financial literacy, a tactician with a talent for communicating complex financial information in engaging ways.
- The ability to gain energy from new connections with people and ideas.
- A dreamer's heart, combined with the ability to execute on big ideas.
- Experience as a mentor and team leader; someone who thrives on bringing out the best in others and celebrating both individual and team wins.
- A real commitment to Kansas City, its people, places, and potential.

COMPENSATION AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The salary range for the Executive Director role starts at \$200,000 and benefits will be highly competitive with other ballet companies of comparable size and stature. KCB has engaged Management Consultants for the Arts to facilitate this search, with the project led by Jonathan West and Shruti Adhar. The search committee, consisting of 8 KCB Board members, is led by Barbara Storm, immediate past president of the Board.

Kansas City Ballet plans to make its decision by Fall 2026. Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to apply in complete confidence by providing materials requested below with these guidelines:

- A cover letter of no more than 1.5 pages describing why this post is attractive to the applicant and what will make them a potentially strong administrative leader for KCB.
- Resumé or CV.
- Names of four professional references, including email and phone contact information (recommendation letters are not required).

Each file should have the applicant's name included as part of the file name and submitted as separate .pdf documents. Use this link to submit all application materials:

<https://mcaonline.com/searches/executive-director-kc-ballet>

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