

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

EXECUTIVE SEARCH • PLANNING • ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

Position Profile
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Studio Theatre
Washington, D.C.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

As it approaches its 50th Anniversary, Studio Theatre is a mainstay of the Washington, D.C. theatre scene, offering bold artistry, challenging themes, and top production values in deliberately intimate spaces. Spanning 48 seasons and more than 350 productions, Studio has grown from a company that produced in a single rented theatre to one that owns a substantial multi-venue complex stretching half a city block in the heart of D.C.'s dynamic 14th Street corridor. With four theatres under one roof -- all of them smaller than 225 seats -- Studio's productions now reach some 40,000 people annually, with audiences from across D.C., Virginia, and Maryland.

The theatre originated in 1978 as an outgrowth of the Joy Zinoman Studio, an acting conservatory that remained a part of the theatre until 2019 when it was spun off into a separate company. In 2010, David Muse became the second Artistic Director in the company's history. Executive Director Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg joined Studio in 2018. In the summer of 2025, Studio announced that David Muse planned to leave Studio in August of 2027, giving the theater the luxury of time to conduct this search.

Studio Theatre presents a diverse roster of thought-provoking contemporary plays featuring an array of local, national, and international theatre artists. Today, Studio produces six productions of contemporary drama each year, generally including a world premiere, and also presents experimental non-mainstage programming, often with an international pedigree. The theatre produces exciting writers and titles, often before they are household names; for instance, *John Proctor is the Villain* had its world premiere at Studio in 2022, as did James Ijames's *Good Bones* in 2023, in addition to premieres by Rachel Bonds, Lucas Hnath, and Duncan Macmillan among others. Studio averages between six and ten actively commissioned artists at a time, including commissioned directors. Studio has received over 400 nominations and 80 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in professional theatre.

In 2022, Studio undertook a major capital project, Open Studio, which was a \$20M project that renovated Studio's public spaces and transformed a formerly fixed-seat theatre into a large, flexible black box space capable of numerous configurations.

MISSION & VALUES

Studio Theatre's mission and values frame and inform all of its decisions and strategic choices.

Mission

Studio Theatre produces exceptional contemporary theatre in deliberately intimate spaces, fostering a more thoughtful, more empathetic, and more connected community, in Washington, D.C., and beyond.

Values

Artistry: *In consistent pursuit of excellence onstage and off, we encourage creativity and exploration, and go about our work with exceptional rigor, craft, and attention to detail.*

Inclusion: *Embracing the differences that enrich our society and our art, we produce a diverse repertoire, and strive to be an especially welcoming place for all.*

Company: *We foster a supportive workplace in which people collaborate with generosity and trust, nurture future arts leaders through exposure and mentorship, and encourage the professional and personal growth of those who work here.*

Stewardship: *We use the theatre's resources mindfully, investing in a vital future for our institution.*

Boldness: *We take chances, challenge the status quo, and produce theatre that fearlessly interrogates the human experience.*

As a values-focused organization, Studio is committed to inclusion and diversity onstage and off. The Studio workforce and community, as well as its work, reflect a wide range of voices.

LEADERSHIP

David Muse, Artistic Director

David Muse is beginning his seventeenth season as Artistic Director of Studio Theatre, where he has produced 116 productions (including directing 23 productions); established Studio R&D, its new work incubator; significantly increased artist compensation; created The Cabinet, an artist advisory board; and oversaw Open Studio, a \$20 million expansion and upgrade of Studio's four-theatre complex. Previously, David was Associate Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company, where he directed nine productions. Other directing projects during his time at Studio have included productions at Arena Stage, Theatre Alliance, and the New York Summer Play Festival. David has taught acting and directing at Georgetown University, Yale University, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy of Classical Acting. A nine-time Helen Hayes Award nominee for Outstanding Direction, he is a recipient of the D.C. Mayor's Arts Award for Outstanding Emerging Artist and the National Theatre Conference Emerging Artist Award. David is a graduate of Yale University and the Yale School of Drama.

Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg, Executive Director

Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg is beginning her ninth season at Studio Theatre, where she has steered the institution through the pandemic and oversaw Open Studio, a \$20 million renovation. She served as the Managing Director of Theater J for eight seasons, during which she led the theatre through an Artistic Director transition and was instrumental in growing income by 29 percent. Prior to that, she worked in arts marketing at Sitar Arts Center, Theater J, and Ford's Theatre. She is currently on the Board of Theatre Washington and previously served as the President of the Board of Forum Theatre, the Chair of the Adjudication Committee for Theatre Washington, and a Helen Hayes Judge. She holds an MA in Arts Administration from Columbia University, a Certificate in Budgeting and Finance from Georgetown University, and is a graduate of Harvard Business School's Strategic Perspectives in Non-Profit Management program.

Board of Trustees

Studio Theatre is governed by an active and committed 33-member Board that includes business and nonprofit leaders, lawyers, civil servants, and community volunteers. The Artistic Director and Executive Director serve in *ex officio* roles on the Board.

CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

- In 2025-26, Studio presented six productions, two in the Mead Theatre, two in the Milton Theatre, and two in the Victor Shargai Theatre.
- For FY26, Studio has a Board-approved budget of \$6.7M (approx. \$2.9M earned/\$3.5M contributed/\$300K other).
- Studio has typically reached 40,000 to 50,000 audience members annually and has approximately 2,500 subscribers.
- The organization currently has a full-time staff of 25, plus 11 full-time annual Fellows-in-Residence, part-time staff of 101, and offers seasonal or contract employment to more than 200. The Fellows program brings valuable annual support to Studio teams while also advancing Studio's values around education and investing in the field.
- Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg, Studio's Executive Director, is an accomplished leader and highly regarded by both staff and board.
- There is also a remarkable alignment among staff and board on Studio's core values. Board and staff share an optimistic and clear-eyed view of their shared opportunities and challenges.
- Studio Theatre owns its building, which includes production shops, administrative offices, rehearsal space, a cafe, and four intimate spaces: Victor Shargai Theatre (170-200 seats), Milton Theatre (187 seats), Mead Theatre (218 seats), and Stage 4 (approx. 100 seats). It also owns nine artist housing units and a house that accommodates up to 12 full-season Fellows.
- Relevant Unions include: LORT D agreements with AEA, USA and SDC.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Coming out of the pandemic with significant strengths and also some challenges, Studio is at a key moment in its history.

- While some other arts organizations are struggling with direction, Studio Theatre is demonstrating both the strength of its artistry and of its audience base. The productions are very well received, and even in the post-pandemic climate Studio productions typically sell between 65% and 90% of capacity. Four of the five highest grossing productions in Studio history have occurred since 2022, and a recent audience survey showed very high support for the artistic choices.
- The organization has developed a strong company culture in recent years, building processes to facilitate transparency and accountability, and putting in place staff-centered policies. The theatre currently possesses a high-functioning senior leadership team, with no open positions.
- Studio has made substantial progress in narrowing its annual operating deficit, but there is still work to do. Studio Board and leadership are tackling this actively and have a detailed multi-year plan to raise revenue – which has already resulted in a 72% increase in individual contributed revenue from FY24 to FY26 -- and manage expense growth. Studio will need continued resourcefulness from leadership, staff, and Board to continue to develop and expand contributed and earned revenue, and balance new investments with further progress on this front. This may include creativity in terms of fundraising and other innovations around revenue sources such as events and partnerships.
- Studio has a beautifully renovated and highly functional space in the heart of Washington, D.C. Partnerships, residencies, and rentals are already occurring and creative growth in this area represents an opportunity to build revenue.
- The Studio Theatre Board is highly engaged and has built a relationship of trust, communication, and transparency with Studio leadership and staff.
- Plans to expand Studio's community engagement were halted due to staff reductions and this represents a priority and an opportunity for growth, particularly as the organization's financial concerns are addressed.
- In recent years, other theatres in the D.C. region have broadened their repertoires to delve more often into contemporary and newly commissioned works. This puts additional pressure on Studio to continue to define its crucial role in the local theatre community and to maintain its visibility and prominence as a leader in new and contemporary theatre.
- The DC arts community is facing several challenges including an administration unfriendly to the arts, reductions in the Federal and contracting workforce, the possible two-year closing of the Kennedy Center, and the Washington Post eliminating much of its theater coverage.

POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

- Cultivate and champion the artistic vision of Studio, planning seasons of stellar,

thought-provoking contemporary theater written by significant playwrights and presented by a mix of local, national, and international artists. These productions will give Studio audiences unique experiences by celebrating and making the most of Studio's deliberately intimate spaces. The AD must have the ability to share the artistic vision in a way that draws people to Studio as audience members, as staff, as guest artists, as donors, and as community members.

- Serve as a highly collaborative co-leader of the Studio Theatre with the Executive Director. Work together to inspire all its constituencies and ensure organizational vision and goals are delivered, always keeping mission and values at the forefront.
- Collectively take ownership of the health and well-being of the institution and its people, ensuring that artistic ambition is balanced with financial and staffing capacity.
- Participate in developing key donor relationships and fundraising efforts to ensure the financial health and vitality of Studio.
- Oversee the Artistic and Production departments including shepherding new work development, artist hiring and casting, and production processes.
- Work with the Executive Director to provide exceptional leadership and management of all of Studio's teams, stewarding a positive, productive, and inclusive company culture.
- Serve as a Studio Theatre ambassador to all organizational constituencies including staff, artists, board, donors, audiences, partner organizations, media, local government and arts organizations, the D.C. Metro area community, and the national theatre field to raise the profile of the organization.
- Oversee strategic planning with the Executive Director, set strategic goals for the theatre, and support the delivery of those goals.
- Ensure that Studio is an active contributor to the vitality of its neighborhood, the wider DC community, and the theatre community as a whole.
- Serve as one of the Studio Board's primary collaborators, working with committees, leading Board-related initiatives, and reporting with transparency.
- Ensure at all times that Studio's programming, culture, and organizational decisions reflect its mission, values, and commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- If a director or practicing artist, the opportunity to serve as a key artist on one or more Studio productions each year.

QUALIFICATIONS

Ideally, the successful candidate for Studio Theatre Artistic Director will possess many of these skills, experiences, and attributes:

- Demonstrated experience as an exceptional, ambitious artist and artistic thinker, ideally with a strong track record in programming and/or directing contemporary plays. A practicing artist, especially a director, is preferred but not required.
- Strong producing skills and the ability to nurture the work of other artists, particularly in new work processes.
- Enthusiasm for relationship-building and a dynamic public presence that will inspire the Board, staff, donors, and public to support the theatre's artistic work and strategic goals.
- Knowledge of and relationships throughout the theater field, as well as curiosity and

insight about where the theatre field is headed.

- Demonstrated management expertise and the ability to work as a collaborative, organized, and decisive leader, building and sustaining a company culture based on transparency, honesty, accountability, and inclusivity.
- A commitment to contributing to the vitality of Studio's community and our nation's capital, and proven potential to do so.
- Strategic thinking, skill at balancing short- and long-term goals and competing priorities, and the ability to build alignment around artistic organizational vision.
- Prior roles with organizations of significant (if not comparable) size or scope is not required but would be preferred.
- Demonstrated personal characteristics of integrity, honesty, resilience, accountability, and ethics.
- Please note, a practicing artist is not a requirement for the position, but would be beneficial.

COMPENSATION, APPLICATION PROCEDURE, AND START DATE

The salary range for this position is \$195,000 - \$210,000.

Studio Theatre offers a generous benefits package including medical insurance with a partial employer contribution and a funded HRA, dental and vision insurance, and FSA; long-term disability insurance; life insurance; 401K with an employer match; and commuter benefits. Studio Theatre's time off policies include annual vacation, paid holidays, additional floating holidays, and separate sick leave.

Studio Theatre has engaged Management Consultants for the Arts to facilitate this search; Emily Knapp and Stephen Richard are leading the process. The hiring decision will be made by the full Studio Board upon consideration of a recommendation by the Search Committee.

Studio expects to make a final decision early in 2027 with the new Artistic Director onsite in Summer 2027. Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to submit in complete confidence a cover letter, resumé, and four professional references. The cover letter of no more than two (2) pages should address how the opportunities and challenges, shared in this profile, intersect with the candidate's professional background and what about this opportunity is of greatest interest to them personally. Application materials should have the applicant's name included as part of each filename and must be submitted electronically through the following link: <https://www.mcaonline.com/searches/artistic-director-studio>

Management Consultants for the Arts, Inc.

www.MCAonline.com

Phone: 203-353-0722

Questions about this search may be submitted to info@MCAonline.com

With "Studio Theatre Artistic Director Search" in the subject line.