



Strings, Orchestras, and Chamber Music Program Director

Description

The Strings, Orchestras, and Chamber Music Program Director at Merit School of Music provides strategic and day-to-day leadership for all strings, orchestra, and chamber music programming across four core areas: Merit Music in Communities, Private Lessons, Instrumental and Vocal Music, and the Alice S. Pfaelzer Conservatory.

This role is responsible for program design, implementation, student recruitment, faculty and staff management, and event execution across multiple Merit string sites and partner locations. The Director supervises string and chamber music faculty, department chairs, one full-time Program Manager, and three part-time staff members, while collaborating closely with program leadership and reporting to the Dean and Vice President for Educational Affairs.

The ideal candidate is an experienced and proactive administrator or string pedagogue with strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and a deep commitment to equitable, high-quality music education. This position plays a crucial role in ensuring that students receive a meaningful, motivational, and inclusive learning experience that aligns with Merit's mission and core values.

This role is a year-round, full-time position requiring work on at least 2 Saturdays each month during the school year, along with periodic evening commitments. The Director also provides guidance and oversight at some organization-wide special events as needed. Summer hours vary but are mostly contained to Monday–Friday.

Organizational Overview

Merit School of Music is a community music school located in Chicago's West Loop. Our primary goals are to help young people transform their lives and experience personal growth through music by providing access to sustained participation. For over 40 years, we have been home to a diverse community of talented young musicians, serving as a springboard for achieving their full musical and personal potential. Our 125 passionate and experienced teaching artists provide access to high-quality music education, engaging over 3,000 students annually at our downtown location and in area schools and community centers.

Our students, who reflect the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of Chicago, have the opportunity to learn from one another, share their dreams, teach each other, and broaden their horizons as they build inspiring lives through music. Merit develops musicians and provides young people with the tools they need to excel in life, with virtually 100 percent of our graduates going on to Conservatory or college.

Merit School of Music is committed to building a world where historically underrepresented groups can access quality music education. Simultaneously, Merit is continually working towards becoming an organization that truly reflects the demographics of the city and the students we serve. Merit is

committed to being an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and anti-racist organization, continually examining our efforts in this area.

Reporting Relationship

The Strings, Orchestras, and Chamber Music Program Director reports to the Dean and Vice President for Educational Affairs.

Job Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Strings, Orchestras, and Chamber Music Program Director include, but are not limited to:

- **Program Oversight and Planning (30%)**
 - Develops, implements, and refines strings, orchestra, and chamber music offerings across all sites and programs
 - Oversees teaching quality, scheduling, class composition, and cancellation decisions
 - Leads event planning and execution (concerts, StringTacular, competitions, recordings)
- **Team Leadership and Faculty Management (25%)**
 - Hires, supports, and evaluates faculty and department chairs
 - Supervises one full-time and three part-time staff
 - Coordinates onboarding and professional development
- **Recruitment and Stakeholder Communication (25%)**
 - Guides recruitment strategy with faculty, supports enrollment follow-up
 - Communicates with families and partners
 - Represents the program internally and externally
- **Administration and Strategic Support (20%)**
 - Manages faculty payroll, budget inputs, projections, and handbook edits
 - Contributes to long-term planning and alignment with Merit's mission and priorities

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

The ideal candidate will demonstrate:

- A bachelor's degree in Music Education, Music Performance, Arts Administration, or a related field
- A strong background in string pedagogy or administration is required, with chamber music experience and familiarity with the Suzuki method preferred
- At least 5 years of relevant experience, ideally within non-profit music education or arts management
- Proven ability to manage and develop part-time and full-time staff, including faculty and administrative team members
- Exceptional organizational and planning skills, with the ability to see several steps ahead, anticipate challenges, and manage multiple concurrent projects across locations
- A track record of being reliable, flexible, and detail-oriented, especially during high-volume seasonal periods
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to build and sustain relationships with faculty, families, students, staff, and partners
- A collaborative and proactive leadership style, aligned with Merit's mission and core values

The following characteristics are nice to have, but not required

- Bilingual fluency in English and Spanish or Mandarin

Schedule

The Strings, Orchestras, and Chamber Music Program Director is a full-time, overtime-exempt position, working a minimum of 37.5 hours per week. The role will require availability for some weekend and evening hours to support select events throughout the academic year. Please plan to be available two Saturdays per month during the academic year (September through May).

We believe in work-life balance and are committed to keeping the workload aligned with the hours worked. At this time, this role offers a balance of in-person and remote work, which will be regularly agreed upon and coordinated with the Dean and Vice President for Educational Affairs. Most program staff work in-person at Merit at least three days per week.

Compensation

Merit offers a comprehensive employee benefits package, including the following items:

- Compensation is commensurate with experience but based on a salary range of \$60,000 to \$75,000 annually.
- You will be eligible to participate in Merit's employee benefits package on the first day of the month following 30 days of employment.
- Merit offers a robust healthcare package including BCBS medical (HMO and PPO options), Delta Dental (HMO and PPO), employee-paid EyeMed vision care, and employee-paid voluntary life insurance coverage.
- One day of paid time off (PTO) earned each month in the first year (increases each anniversary) and seven paid holidays in addition to a paid winter break (approximately one week).
- 401(k) eligibility begins on the first day of the new calendar quarter following one year of employment

Further information on our benefits package and employee policies is available upon request.

How to Apply

To apply, please upload your resume detailing your relevant experience and qualifications for this role [using this link](#). Applications will be accepted through July 14, 2025. Materials should be compatible with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF. Applicants will not receive confirmation of receipt of their materials. Updates about the hiring process will arrive by e-mail, with interviews provided for finalists.

ALAANA/BIPOC people, trans, and gender-nonconforming people, and women are encouraged to apply.

For more information about Merit School of Music, please visit www.meritmusic.org.

Merit School of Music is committed to enhancing the diversity of our musical community, recognizing that by providing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for our students, we are preparing them for personal and professional success in an increasingly multicultural and global society. The Merit community recognizes that it has a responsibility for creating and sustaining a learning and working environment where difference is valued, and where equity and inclusion are practiced.