# Strings & Orchestra Program Manager

**Full-Time Position Announcement**

Chicago, Illinois

## DESCRIPTION

Merit School of Music seeks a full-time Strings & Orchestra Program Manager to serve as the organizational hub for one of Chicago's most vibrant youth strings and orchestra programs. Reporting to the Strings & Orchestra Program Director, this role provides the daily infrastructure that keeps hundreds of students, teaching artists, and families moving in sync across Merit's strings programming throughout the year.

The Strings & Orchestra Program Manager is the first point of contact for families, faculty, and staff on everything from class scheduling and instrument coordination to event logistics and ongoing communication. Day-to-day, that means ensuring students and teachers have the materials they need, keeping attendance records accurate and up to date, managing room reservations, and partnering with the Strings & Orchestra Program Director to plan and execute a full season of rehearsals, concerts, and performances.

A passion for upholding the dignity of everyone we interact with and for Merit's mission to provide access to high-quality music education is a must.

## ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Merit School of Music is a nationally accredited community music school headquartered in Chicago's West Loop, with additional branches in Chicago's Old Town and South Shore neighborhoods. Merit's primary goals are to help young people transform their lives and experience personal growth through music by providing access to sustained participation. For more than 45 years, Merit has been home to a diverse community of talented young musicians and has served as a springboard for them to achieve their full musical and personal potential. Our 125+ passionate and experienced teaching artists provide access to high-quality music education, engaging between 2,500 and 3,000 students annually through programming at three branches and in 25+ schools and community centers across the Chicago region.

Merit students, who reflect Chicago's socioeconomic and ethnic diversity, have the rare opportunity to learn together, dream together, teach each other, and broaden their horizons as they build inspiring lives through music. Merit develops musicians and equips young people with the tools they need to excel in life; virtually 100 percent of Merit graduates attend conservatories or colleges, with 50 percent studying music at the postsecondary level.

Merit School of Music is committed to building a world where historically underrepresented groups can attain access to quality music education. Simultaneously, Merit endeavors to be an organization that genuinely reflects Chicago's richly diverse community. Merit is dedicated to being an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and anti-racist organization and continually examining our efforts in this area.

## REPORTING RELATIONSHIP

The Strings & Orchestra Program Manager reports to the Strings & Orchestra Program Director.

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## ESSENTIAL DUTIES

Responsibilities of the Strings & Orchestra Program Manager include, but are not limited to:

**Class and Activity Scheduling – 35%**

- Create and manage class offerings, room reservations, and faculty teaching schedules
- Monitor attendance records regularly and partner with the Strings & Orchestra Program Director to establish and maintain a culture of accuracy and accountability
- Support summer camp scheduling and logistics

**Faculty and Family Communication – 25%**

- Communicate program details, including classes, lessons, events, and concerts, to Merit strings families in a timely and professional manner
- Facilitate ongoing communication between families and strings faculty
- Respond to family and faculty inquiries, ensuring timely follow-up

**Instrument and Supply Coordination – 15%**

- In coordination with Merit's Librarian, ensure students and faculty have the instruments, sheet music, and supplies needed for programming

**Event Planning and Support – 15%**

- Support the planning and execution of concerts, performances, and student recruitment events
- Prepare stage diagrams, draft concert programs, and manage run-of-show logistics

**Other Duties as Assigned – 10%**

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## KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

**Must-Have Characteristics**

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent training and experience
- Adaptable and receptive to feedback; comfortable taking on clearly defined responsibilities, and contributing collaboratively as part of a team while completing work in a timely and accurate manner
- Skilled at distinguishing between urgency and importance, and comfortable adjusting as both shift
- Proactive and self-directed; takes initiative, works independently in a fast-paced environment, and asks for support when needed
- Organized and detail-oriented: nothing falls through the cracks, and successful candidates can speak to their systems and why they work
- Strong written and verbal communicator; responds to families, faculty, and colleagues in a timely, professional, and clear manner
- Flexible mindset: comfortable working independently and collaboratively. Willing to learn new skills and think creatively to support various projects.
- Committed to communicating with dignity and respect in all interactions with students, families, faculty, and staff

**Preferred, But Not Required**

- Musical background; experience as a string player is strongly preferred
- Spanish or Mandarin language skills; many Merit families connect with us primarily in one of these languages, and candidates with this ability will be better positioned to support direct communication with families

## SCHEDULE

At Merit School of Music, 37.5 hours constitute a full-time work week. The typical schedule during the academic year (September through May) is as follows:

- **Tuesday and Thursday: 11:00 am to 7:00 pm**
- **Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**
- Sunday and Monday: Off

During the summer months (June through August), the schedule shifts to Monday through Thursday, **9:00 am to 5:00 pm**, and Friday, **9:00 am to 1:00 pm**.

Some late evenings are required for special events. While this position is not eligible for paid overtime, comp days are available in consultation with your supervisor.

Merit currently operates on a hybrid schedule, with all hybrid and remote arrangements determined by the employee and their supervisor. During the first three to six months of employment, in-person work of approximately four days per week is expected for onboarding and training.

## TECHNOLOGY IN HIRING

At the Merit School of Music, we believe in a human-centered recruitment process. While our team occasionally leverages generative AI tools to assist with administrative tasks, such as formatting job descriptions or summarizing interview notes, we do not use algorithms, automated screening software, or AI platforms to evaluate, rank, or screen applicants. Every application and hiring decision is reviewed and made entirely by human hands and minds.

## COMPENSATION AND APPLICATION

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

- Salary of $50,000 based on experience.
- The first 90 days of employment are considered a probationary period. Employees are eligible to participate in Merit's employee benefits package 30 days from the date of hire, following the first of the month. For example, an employee starting on August 2 would begin their insurance benefits on October 1.
- BCBS medical insurance (HMO and PPO options), Delta Dental (HMO and PPO), with 80% of employee premiums and 50% of dependent premiums paid by Merit.
- EyeMed vision care and Mutual of Omaha voluntary life insurance coverage are offered at the employee's expense.
- One day of paid time off (PTO) earned for each month worked during your first year. One and a half days earned per month in your second year. The annual PTO accrual continues escalating through the seventh year of employment.
- One hour of paid sick leave earned per 40 hours worked, according to the Chicago Paid Sick & Safe Leave Ordinance.
- Eight paid holidays plus a company-wide paid winter break (Christmas through January 2).
- Following one year of employment, you will be eligible to participate in Merit's 401(k) plan, including a 3% employer contribution.

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

To apply, please upload your resume detailing your relevant experience and qualifications for this role using this link. Please apply before **Thursday, October 1, 2026**. Materials should be compatible with Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF.

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

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

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*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 its responsibility to create and sustain a learning and working environment where difference is valued and equity and inclusion are practiced.*