

# MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

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EXECUTIVE SEARCH • PLANNING • ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

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**POSITION PROFILE**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
**KANSAS CITY BALLET**  
**KANSAS CITY, MO**

**BACKGROUND & HISTORY**

The Kansas City Ballet (KCB) since its inception has developed, updated, and followed a detailed strategic planning process which has resulted in remarkable growth, not only in beautiful, functional home facilities and performance venues, and in the numbers and quality of its professional company and repertoire, and its KCB's supporting activities, but also in its significant financial stability. KCB is a model of successful management, both artistically and fiscally, with incredible donor support, a sophisticated audience, and a dedicated staff and Board of Directors leadership.

KCB was founded in 1957 by Tatiana Dokoudovska with the goal of establishing a regular presence for ballet in the city. For 20 years she nurtured the company before her retirement. In 1980, Todd Bolender, a former New York City Ballet dancer and international opera and ballet choreographer was chosen to lead. In 1986, the company was renamed the State Ballet of Missouri following a joint venture with Dance St. Louis. In 1996, that partnership ended and in 2000 the original name Kansas City Ballet was reclaimed. In 1995, with Bolender's appointment to artistic director emeritus, William Whitener was appointed artistic director. He served until 2013 creating versatile programs filled with contemporary work and traditional company hallmarks. Devon Carney has led the company as artistic director since 2013 in fulfillment of organization's mission:

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

Carney's tenure has brought to Kansas City a renewed excitement about the future of dance in the nation. In his first year, he created KCB II, an ensemble that performs at a variety of venues throughout the region on a smaller scale to make dance more accessible. The following year, Mr. Carney created the Trainee Program to complete the bridge from school to company. Mr. Carney is dedicated to bringing a balanced repertoire to the KCB community by presenting authentic interpretations of the great classics of the dance world, time-honored 20th-century creations, and world premieres from today's leading choreographers.

The KCB School and an Engagement and Education Department are dedicated to enriching all ages in the community with programs revolving around dance. Both have grown in their commitment, size, and programs to fit the needs of the Greater Kansas City area community. More information on KCB can be found on its website: <https://kcballet.org>

## LEADERSHIP

### **Devon Carney, Artistic Director**

The 2022-2023 season marks Devon Carney's 10th Anniversary as Artistic Director of KCB. Carney was born in New Orleans, where he began his dance training. He later joined the New Orleans Ballet, where he danced his first leading roles. In 1978, Mr. Carney was invited to join Boston Ballet where he was promoted to principal in 1986. Mr. Carney served as Ballet Master for Boston Ballet from 1998 to 2003. Mr. Carney was with the Cincinnati Ballet from 2003 to 2013, serving as the Associate Artistic Director, prior to being appointed Artistic Director of KCB starting with the 2013–2014 season. Upon arrival, he created his first work for the company, titled *Opus I*. Other works choreographed for the company include *Swan Lake*, *Cinderella*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Romeo & Juliet*. The 2017-2018 season closed with Mr. Carney's world premiere choreography of *Peter Pan*. Additionally, his *The Nutcracker* has been performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2017 and 2022.

### **Jeffrey J. Bentley, Executive Director**

Jeffrey J. Bentley, Executive Director of KCB has been involved in dance and theater for over 50 years as a performer, administrator, festival director, dance presenter, teacher, and consultant. Mr. Bentley began his professional ballet training as a scholarship student with the American Ballet Center in New York City. He later trained at the School of American Ballet. In 1987, he assumed the position of director of the Dance Aspen Festival and School in Aspen, Colorado. During his seven-year tenure, the festival grew from a three-week residency dedicated to a single ballet company to an eight-week festival featuring an eclectic array of companies and artists from around the world. In 1993, Mr. Bentley became Executive Director of Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, that country's oldest and highly respected ballet company. He was appointed Executive Director of KCB in 1998. In June 2023, Mr. Bentley will leave his position as the KCB's Executive Director following 25 years of service.

The Board of Directors of KCB consists of 32 members including business leaders, professionals, philanthropists, community leaders, and volunteers. The search committee, consisting of 10 members, is led by Jack Rowe, immediate past president of the Board.

## CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

### FINANCES

KCB currently operates on an annual budget of approximately \$10M with 35% of revenue coming from ticket sales, 18% from its school's tuition, 19% from other revenue sources (including endowment income and a spending escrow), and 28% from contributed revenue. KCB's endowment currently stands at \$16M+.

### 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 Moshie Safdie – it is one of the jewels of the Greater Kansas City area. The KCB performs in the 1800 seat Muriel Kauffman Theatre in the Center. The Center was a project borne out of the vision of Muriel McBrien Kauffman, mother of its Chairman of the Board Julia

Irene Kauffman who is also a significant benefactor of KCB and has long served as its Chairman of the Board.

### **KCB'S SEASON**

KCB's season consists generally of a two-weekend fall performance, the Nutcracker performances over a several week period during the December holidays, a two-weekend winter performance, a two-weekend spring performance, and a series of performances called "New Moves" during the March period. KCB's strategic planning process anticipates the expansion of performances.

The current KCB season opened in October 2022 with *Giselle*. In addition to the company's annual performances of *The Nutcracker*, the season will also feature a production of *Cinderella* in the February 2023 and an evening of mixed repertory featuring works by Mark Morris, Jiří Kylián, and Alexander Ekman in May 2023. New Moves is scheduled for March 2023.

### **THE PROFESSIONAL COMPANY AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

There are 30 dancers, including apprentices, in the professional company (who are represented by the American Guild of Musical Artists for the purpose of collective bargaining). There are also six-seven members of KCB II in addition to 12 to 18 trainees, who collectively make up the Second Company. KCB employs 38 full-time staff members.

### **THE TODD BOLENDER CENTER FOR DANCE & CREATIVITY**

Located on the west edge of the Union Station campus, the historic Power House building at Union Station was transformed into the Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity and opened in August 2011. Once a power plant where huge boilers burned coal to generate steam for Union Station, the building has been transformed into the 60,000-square-foot home of KCB including seven studios (with rehearsal space the same size as the Muriel Kauffman Theatre stage at the Kauffman Center) and the Michael and Ginger Frost Studio Theater, which seats 180. The facility also houses wardrobe and costume facilities, a physical therapy suite, and administrative offices.

### **KANSAS CITY BALLET SCHOOL**

Under the direction of School Director Grace Holmes, the KCB School offers a complete, professional curriculum for its Academy students. With locations in downtown Kansas City and a facility currently being dramatically expanded in adjacent Johnson County, Kansas, the School maintains a faculty of over 50 instructors serving nearly 500 students. The School's Dance & Fitness Class Division attracts teens and adults who wish to pursue recreational dance instruction in a supportive and encouraging setting.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION**

KCB's Community Engagement and Education Department provides joyful and meaningful experiences that inspire, inform, and engage the broader community. The organization is committed to making dance accessible to everyone, from very young children to senior citizens, through workshops, interactive dance demonstrations, discounted performances, adult education

programs, and open company rehearsals. On average, approximately 20,000 people annually benefit from KCB's community engagement and education programs, such as Student Matinees, Lecture Demonstrations, Dance Workshops, Pre-performance programs, Ballet Tours, and the Reach Out and Dance (R.O.A.D.) Residency and Scholarship programs, throughout Missouri and Kansas.

KCB has developed and continues a long term strategic planning process which serves as its guide for future direction. This process has resulted in continued success and advancement, both artistically and financially. Additionally, under the leadership of a nine-member Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Committee, KCB has embarked on a deep and thorough examination of its operations, programming, and productions to advance its mission and vision.

### **KANSAS CITY**

The Greater Kansas City Area, embracing adjacent communities in both Missouri and Kansas, is currently just over 2 million in population, having grown by 50% over the past two decades. With a thriving economy and low cost-of-living, the Greater Kansas City Area is enviable among U.S. locales. There is a robust business environment; many corporate headquarters are there, including H&R Block, Hallmark, JE Dunn Construction, Farmland Foods, and Garmin International, among many others.

Kansas City also is home to professional sports teams Sporting KC and The Current (soccer), Chiefs (football), and Royals (baseball) and their magnificent venues. The arts and cultural community is vibrant. Performing and visual arts entities include The Lyric Opera, Kansas City Symphony, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, alongside superb shopping, innumerable restaurants and great blues and jazz clubs. More information on this exciting community can be found at [www.visitkc.com](http://www.visitkc.com)

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The next Executive Director will join an organization with an impressive financial foundation and business model. Among the opportunities for the next Executive Director are:

- Notwithstanding the current multi-million-dollar endowment, understanding the need to significantly increase that endowment in the current campaign and in the future, to provide sustainable financial resources to continue the success of KCB.
- Expanding performance opportunities for the professional company and building on the organization's impressive foundation and relationship to Kansas City through expanded community engagement efforts.
- Expanding the growth and depth of the KCB audience.
- Embracing values of IDEA – inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility – in all their iterations, and working with the Board and senior team to reinforce these values throughout the organization.
- Nurturing existing partnerships and seeking new performance collaborations and co-production opportunities including not only live but also virtual, locally, nationally, and internationally.

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

- Not only enticing patrons back to live performances in a time of quickly changing buying trends and ever widening competition, but also expanding the growth and depth of the KCB audience.
- Balancing the ongoing challenge of artistic ambition and fiscal stability.
- Addressing the increasing costs of large-scale production.

### **POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Executive Director will work in a collaborative relationship with the Artistic Director with both positions reporting to and working with the Board of Directors. It is, of course, critically important that the individuals in these two positions continue to work in a cohesive and productive manner. The central roles of the Executive Director are as follows:

- Forge and maintain important external local/regional/national relationships and serve as an external voice and advocate of KCB.
- Continue a productive partnership with the Artistic Director and Board to implement the KCB's current strategic planning process and develop future strategies.
- Align all human and financial resources strategically, ensuring the artistic/business model is solid, sustaining and further developing the fiscal viability of the organization to sustain and enhance the growth and quality of KCB's product for its audience.
- Manage and develop a high-functioning team. Direct reports include the Chief Philanthropic Director, Director of Marketing, Director of Community Engagement & Education, CFO, COO, Finance, the Executive Assistant, and any other positions that fall under the administrative functions of the Company.
- Serve as a principal, and be responsible for, in developing creative, viable, productive and successful fundraising, especially with major and prospective donors, and continue the nurturing and growth of long-held partnerships.
- Ensure that KCB has effective communication and marketing efforts, with a focus on increasing ticket sales, audience engagement, and subscriptions targeting the growth and depth of KCB's audience.
- In concert with the Artistic Director, strive to create a positive and productive culture, providing leadership that will generate innovation throughout a diverse team.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

The chosen candidate will be someone likely to establish strong and productive working partnerships with the Artistic Director and the Board; prior experience with such partnerships will be viewed as essential. Successful candidates will also have the following skill sets and experience:

- Strong passion for building a great cultural institution fully rooted in its community.
- Demonstrated success in building meaningful relationships, internally and externally, including with donors, business partners, and civic leaders.
- Strong experience in and knowledge of the economics of arts organizations and the ability to align artistic ambition and resources strategically.

- A commitment to IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility), evidenced in current and previous leadership roles.
- An open, flexible and innovative spirit, desirous of finding innovation solutions.
- Dance experience is helpful but not required, yet serious candidates must have enthusiasm for the arts, culture and the work for which KCB is known.
- Demonstrated ability to motivate and lead a team.
- Grit, drive, tenacity.
- Superlative social and interpersonal skills in social and business contexts.

The following personal attributes are also important to the Committee:

- A well-developed leadership style with a collaborative spirit.
- Hunger for excellence.
- A desire to fully engage with Kansas City's many communities.
- Humility and a delight in seeing the best work in others.

### **COMPENSATION, APPLICATION PROCEDURE, AND START DATE**

The salary 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 David Mallette, Jason Palmquist and Shruti Adhar. The Company hopes to make its decision by Spring, 2023. 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 application materials:

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

#### **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 "Kansas City Ballet Executive Director Search" in the subject line.

*November 2, 2022*