



Eric Jacobsen, Music Director

Virginia Symphony Orchestra

President & CEO

Organization

The Virginia Symphony Orchestra (VSO) is the only full-time professional symphony orchestra serving Coastal Virginia. For more than 100 years, the VSO has served as a cultural cornerstone of Southeast Virginia, committed to fostering a dynamic, accessible, and creative community. The VSO is the foundation of the performing arts community in the region and regularly collaborates with other arts organizations, providing the professional musicians for partners including Virginia Opera, Virginia Arts Festival, and Richmond Ballet.

As the largest performing arts organization in southeastern Virginia, the VSO and VSO Chorus present more than 150 concerts and events annually for more than 100,000 residents and visitors. The VSO is fortunate to perform its major concerts in three excellent venues — Ferguson Center for the Arts (1,753 seats) on the campus of Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Chrysler Hall (2,500 seats) in downtown Norfolk, and Sandler Center for the Performing Arts (1,308 seats) in the vibrant Town Center area of Virginia Beach. The VSO travels throughout Hampton Roads to cities that do not have a resident professional orchestra, making musical experiences more accessible to these communities. The VSO also has deep relationships with all 11 school districts in its region and performs concerts for nearly 25,000 students each year regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Since 2019, the VSO has been recognized nationally for striving to reflect the region's ethnic and racial diversity in its members, its programming, and its leadership. In collaboration with Old Dominion University, the VSO has created a new African American Fellowship Program for four early-career orchestral string musicians to advance the goal of increased diversity of orchestral musicians nationwide. Starting this fall, fellows will perform as part of the VSO in over 100 services throughout eastern Virginia and engage in public school residencies and educational performances. Professional development opportunities, including private lessons and mentorship, will better equip Fellows to achieve in their careers as performers and educators. The VSO was also fortunate to be selected as one of 23 orchestras to receive a special grant to undertake the work of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) with three consecutive years of funding from the League of American Orchestras.

Additionally, recent artistic and social innovations throughout the community include health and wellness programs, including interactive therapeutic experiences for people living with Alzheimer's and dementia, and adopting welcoming concert environments for those who are neurodiverse. The VSO has actively deployed artists to create new programs including music therapy in memory-care facilities; expanded partnerships with historically Black churches; and developed initiatives that provide access for those with sensory sensitivities and mobility challenges.

The VSO continues to challenge expectations and push the boundaries of what an American orchestra can be. Innovation and excellence are at the heart of the VSO's narrative. The VSO has received national attention for its unique mission serving a home area of 1.7 million across the diverse communities of southeastern Virginia. Through appearances at The Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall and commitment to adventurous programming, the VSO and its musicians have been highlighted in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, National Public Radio, and BBC Worldwide News, among others.

The selection of the young and dynamic conductor Eric Jacobsen as music director in 2021 was another bold step forward for the VSO, further expanding its vision to attract wider and larger audiences with engaging concert experiences and creative and relevant programming. Rounding out the artistic leadership team is Norfolk native Thomas Wilkins in the role of Principal Guest Conductor, reflecting the VSO's commitment to tell its community's stories and advance the important conversations that will promote understanding and belonging among residents.

A member of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, the VSO employs 77 musicians for 36 weeks over a 42-week season and benefits from a 100-voice volunteer Chorus. The VSO has a 24-member board of directors, a full-time staff of 19, and a part-time staff of 16. For the pre-pandemic fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, the VSO reported a total revenue of \$6.3 million with \$3.8 million from contributions and grants, and \$2.5 million from program services with total expenses of \$6.3 million. The VSO's fiscal 2023 revenues are anticipated to be approximately \$7.3M million with \$4.6 million from contributions and grants, and \$2.7 million from program services. Its endowment stands at approximately \$8.2 million.

Community

The Hampton Roads metropolitan area consists of nine cities and seven counties with a population of over 1.7 million in southeastern Virginia. The region boasts one of the world's largest natural harbors and the world's largest navy base. It attracts millions of tourists for the historical and cultural significance of the area and the beaches of the coastline. Federal defense, tourism, and maritime commerce are the major, longtime drivers of the area's economic and population growth and stability. The metropolitan statistical area (MSA) includes Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Norfolk, Newport News, Hampton, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Williamsburg, Poquoson, Franklin, and the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Mathews, Southampton, and York. Three North Carolina counties are also considered part of the MSA: Camden, Currituck and Gates. The demographics of the Hampton Roads MSA include 57% White, 31% Black/African American, 4% Asian, 4% mixed race, and 4% other races.

This complex area straddles the waterway known as Hampton Roads, a large bay that empties into the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. It is the largest metropolitan area in the state of Virginia in terms of population and offers an interesting mix of urban, suburban, waterfront and inland environments. Additionally the area has a substantial Navy and Marine presence and a sizeable portion of the economy is connected to these activities. Virginia Beach has grown rapidly and is an interesting mix of touristy beachfront and modern commercial and family residential areas with the large Oceana Naval Air Station thrown into the mix for good measure. The greater area has an assortment of museums particularly related to its maritime history, as well as a good set of performing arts activities. Numerous rivers and waterways traverse the area. The land is low and level throughout the city. The climate is generally marine and the geographic location avoids the worst of northern and southern storm tracks. Cool Atlantic breezes frequently temper the long, warm summers. Extreme temperatures are infrequent, and winters are usually mild and may pass with no measurable snowfall.

Sources: thinkcurrituck.com/blog/hampton-roads-population; ghrconnects.org/demographicdata?id=281263; simonhouses.com/articles/cities/five-reasons-hampton-roads.php; bestplaces.net/city/virginia/hampton

Position Summary

The President & CEO will generate and execute strategies and operating plans, ensure fiscal resiliency from both earned and contribute revenues, and articulate the VSO's mission, vision, and values to a wide array of stakeholders. The President & CEO will be responsible for the implementation of policies and key strategies as set by the board of directors in collaboration with the artistic and management teams. As a highly visible and public figure, the President & CEO will bolster education and community engagement programs to ensure strong participation in the VSO's numerous activities throughout the region. Demonstrating a deep knowledge of and ability to implement evolving business models, the President & CEO will exemplify a forward-thinking vision that integrates innovative programming with positive artistic, educational, and social impacts. The President & CEO will develop meaningful and authentic relationships with subscribers, individual and corporate donors, foundations, educational institutions, government agencies, convention and visitor bureaus, and civic organizations, among others. Mutually beneficial partnerships with these individuals and organizations will be important to the future success of the VSO.

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Board Governance

- Lead the development and implementation of a strategic plan with clear operational goals that advances the VSO into its second century of service.
- Engage with the board and senior management team to establish timelines and performance measures that focus on the achievement of the strategic plan's goals.
- Readily adapt to changing demographic, market, and social trends to effectively respond to the communities served by the VSO.
- Guide diverse board prospect identification, cultivation, and recruitment with the Governance Committee with inclusion at the forefront of thinking and planning.
- Collaborate with the Board Chair to leverage the experience of board committees that focus on board orientation, education, and succession planning with an eye towards future board members and leaders.
- Advise the board on effective policy setting, community ambassadorship, fundraising, and general governance practices.
- Stay abreast of activities and developments in the orchestra industry and advise the board on matters that may be helpful to advance the VSO's objectives.
- Embrace other strategic leadership and board governance responsibilities, as needed.

Community Engagement and Revenue Maximization

- Raise the VSO's public image through proactive community participation, engagement, and strategic partnerships that clearly articulate the value of the VSO.
- Develop authentic and mutually beneficial relationships with community, educational, and social service organizations to better engage with the diverse region that the VSO serves.
- Establish professional relationships with key funders and audience members to support the VSO's unique multi-venue operating needs.
- Identify and engage with key community partners to diversify and expand the organization's individual, foundation, corporate, and government donor base.
- Strengthen earned and contributed revenue opportunities with the board, development staff, and marketing team to achieve short- and long-term financial goals.
- Cultivate new and existing donors for ongoing support while seeking new prospects to ensure a robust and diversified funding base.
- Embrace other community engagement and revenue maximization responsibilities, as needed.

Artistic Partnerships and Innovation

- Collaborate with the Music Director to design artistic programs that highlight symphony musicians, guest conductors, and guest artists where they can achieve the highest quality programs and performances.
- Leverage the VSO's artistic, educational, and programmatic objectives by supporting innovative program concepts, special events, and audience engagement activities that are in alignment with financial capacity.
- Develop meaningful and respectful relations between the VSO board, staff, and its deeply valued musicians and ensure that the collective bargaining agreement with the American Federation of Musicians is equitable.
- Seek out new education and community engagement opportunities for the VSO in consultation with the Music Director and artistic team.
- Embrace other artistic partnerships and innovation responsibilities as needed.

Fiscal Vitality and Organizational Management

- Develop, monitor, and report organizational financial performance and readily adapt to changing circumstances.
- Recruit, engage, and mentor an experienced and dedicated management team with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Foster an ongoing culture of positivity via open and honest communication with board, staff, and musicians, embedded in a team building philosophy rooted in trust and cohesion.
- Design equity and diversity plans with senior board and staff leadership that reflect workforce needs and volunteer support for inclusive and accessible programs for audiences, students, and musicians.
- Determine and measure attainable employee goals, establish appropriate performance measures, and ensure equitable compensation structures and benefit programs.
- Embrace other fiscal vitality and organizational management responsibilities, as needed.

Traits and Characteristics

The President & CEO will be a collaborative leader in both guiding and supporting organizational, artistic, team, and diversity goals. Receptive to new ideas and driven by a commitment to deliver results, this individual will be people-oriented and thrive in an organization that seeks opportunities for thoughtful adaptation and proactive change. Extremely comfortable in settings where there is frequent interaction with others, the President & CEO will be instinctive and authentic by nature in establishing, cultivating, and building relationships throughout the region.

Other key competencies include:

- **Leadership, Flexibility, and Resiliency** – The vitality to organize and motivate other people to accomplish goals, create a sense of order and direction, adapt to changing circumstances, develop a deeply rooted organizational culture, and gain active participation from board, staff, musicians, and strategic partners.
- **Interpersonal Skills** – The flexibility to anticipate, meet, and exceed stakeholder and partner needs while communicating effectively, building rapport, listening carefully, and relating well to an array of diverse constituencies.

- **Negotiation and Diplomacy** – The ability to understand diverse stakeholder perspectives and set a course of action that respects others, treats them fairly regardless of personal biases or beliefs, and maintains positive and productive relationships in facilitating mutually beneficial agreements.
- **Personal and Professional Accountability** – The integrity to meet the highest ethical standards in establishing relevant, realistic, and attainable goals and objectives while anticipating the effects, outcomes, and calculated risks of various options.

Qualifications

A minimum of seven to nine years of relevant senior management experience in maximizing philanthropic support, increasing earned revenues, and demonstrating financial accountability is necessary. A bachelor's degree is required and a master's degree in business, arts administration, nonprofit management, or a related field is preferred. A commitment to classical music, pops programming, and the performing arts is expected. Demonstrable experience in strategic partnerships and active community participation is needed and innovative business experience is welcomed. Candidates must also have exceptional writing and verbal communication skills, the ability to regularly travel throughout the region, and the capacity to attend evening and weekend performances.

Compensation and Benefits

The VSO offers a competitive compensation package with a base salary estimated in the range of \$165,000 to \$200,000. It also contributes to a variety of employee benefits, including among four Optima health plans, dental, and vision insurances. The VSO also provides life insurance, as well as short- and long-term disability insurances. The VSO offers a flexible Health Spending Account and a dependent care flexible spending account at employee's cost. Employees may contribute to a pre-tax or Roth 403(b) plan. The quality of life, cost of living, and amenities in the Hampton Roads area are excellent with appropriate paid time off and parking benefits.

Applications and Inquiries

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable revenue and community engagement accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are music to our ears! The Virginia Symphony Orchestra is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to increasing diversity among our applicant pool, our musicians, our staff, our board of directors, and in our program offerings. We strongly encourage people from all backgrounds, especially Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color, as well as people with non-traditional experience and educational backgrounds, to apply for this position.