



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Power of Live Performance

Live performance creates a shared experience that cannot be reproduced anywhere else.

Artists and audiences meet in the same room, at the same time. Each performance is shaped by the people onstage, the people watching, and the energy between them. The result can be joyful, moving, challenging, or unexpected. It can change how people see an idea, an artist, or one another.

Leading a performing arts organization means creating the conditions for those moments to happen. It requires artistic curiosity, financial judgment, operational discipline, strong relationships, and care for the people who make the work possible.

It also requires a deep understanding of place. A theatre can become part of a city's identity. It can introduce children to their first live performance, give local artists a professional stage, bring world-class talent to the region, and offer the community a place to gather.

For nearly 100 years, The Mount Baker Theatre has served that role in Bellingham.

About The Mount Baker Theatre

The Mount Baker Theatre opened in 1927 as a vaudeville and cinema palace. Architect R.C. Reamer designed the building. His work also includes Seattle's Fifth Avenue Theatre and Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park.

The theatre reflects Reamer's Moorish-Spanish design, with detailed ornamentation and influences that include French Baroque, High Gothic, Moroccan, Mediterranean, Italian Renaissance, and Egyptian Revival styles. Its original Wurlitzer organ remains in use and is one of only 12 in the world still played in its original venue.

The Main Stage includes 1,509 seats and eight permanent wheelchair locations. The 150-seat Harold and Irene Walton Theatre offers a small setting for intimate concerts, comedy, theatre, meetings, and community events.

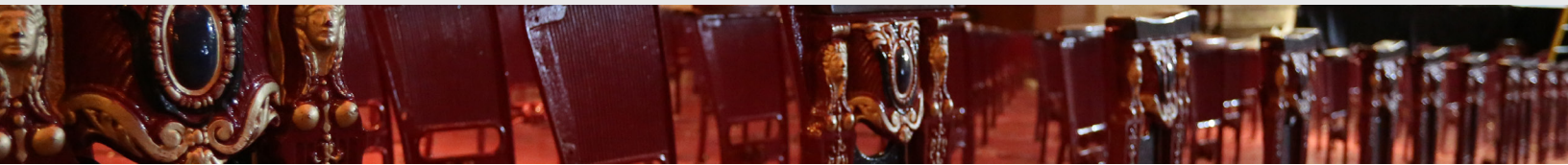
Mount Baker Theatre presents major touring artists, Broadway productions, music, comedy, film, arts education, and community programs. The Bellingham Symphony Orchestra serves as its resident orchestra, and local arts organizations use the theatre's professional spaces throughout the year.

In 2024-25, the theatre issued 109,145 tickets and generated \$6.56 million in operating revenue. Its season included 41 Main Stage shows, 22 Lookout Sessions, 15 education events, and more than 20 Bellingham Symphony Orchestra events. Nearly half of patrons were new to The Mount Baker Theatre, and 16 percent traveled more than 50 miles to attend.

The Mount Baker Theatre is also an important part of downtown Bellingham. Performances bring audiences into surrounding restaurants, hotels, shops, and public spaces. The City of Bellingham owns the building, and the nonprofit Mount Baker Theatre organization operates and stewards it.

Its mission is clear:

"The Mount Baker Theatre Organization enriches our region's culture through dynamic performances and arts education, inspiring community engagement and the stewardship of a national historic treasure."



The Role

Mount Baker Theatre seeks an accomplished and community-minded Executive Director to lead the organization into its second century.

The Executive Director will serve as Mount Baker Theatre's chief executive and public representative. Working with the Board of Directors and an experienced leadership team, the Executive Director will set direction, strengthen the organization, and expand its impact across Bellingham and the broader region.

This is a visible role. The Executive Director will build relationships with donors, civic and business leaders, public partners, artists, patrons, and community organizations. The leader will help people understand Mount Baker Theatre's value and invite them to support its future.

The Executive Director will join a capable team with deep experience in programming, operations, finance, development, marketing, and patron services. The role calls for clear priorities, strong communication, sound decisions, and consistent accountability.

Key priorities include fundraising, team leadership, community engagement, financial stewardship, leadership succession, and care of the historic building.

The successful candidate will combine a commitment to live performance with the executive judgment, financial skill, fundraising ability, and public presence needed to lead a major regional institution.

Year One Success

1. Build Fundraising Momentum

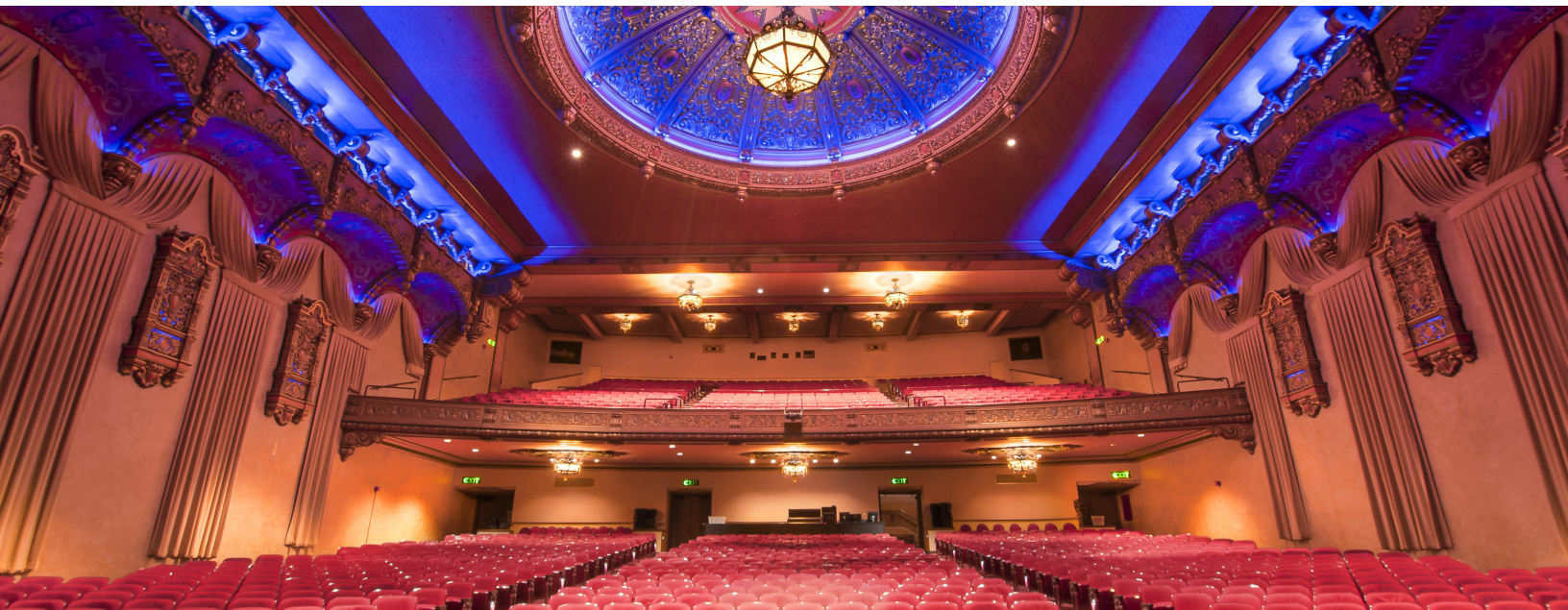
Develop and begin executing a clear fundraising plan for the Centennial Campaign and Mount Baker Theatre's broader philanthropic goals.

2. Support a Cohesive, High-Performing Team

Build on the experience and strengths of the leadership team so the organization is aligned, supported, and set up to succeed.

3. Strengthen Community Relationships and Define the Theatre's Future

Build effective community relationships and use that engagement to articulate a clear vision for Mount Baker Theatre's next chapter.



Key Responsibilities

Organizational Leadership

- **Lead** and **develop** the senior team across programming, facilities and operations, finance, development, marketing, and patron services.
- **Set** clear goals, priorities, and expectations.
- Clarify decision-making authority across departments.
- **Build** a cohesive leadership team with shared accountability.
- **Strengthen** communication and coordination across functions.
- **Support** professional growth and leadership development.
- **Address** conflict directly, fairly, and consistently.
- **Strengthen** performance review and staff development practices.
- **Complete** a succession plan for key leadership roles.
- **Review** the organization's structure and recommend changes that support long-term success.
- **Create** a workplace where staff feel respected, informed, and able to contribute their best work.

Operations

- **Provide** executive oversight of programming, venue operations, production, facilities, front of house, patron experience, marketing, development, and administration.
- **Support** department leaders in their areas of expertise while holding them accountable for results.
- **Ensure** departments work toward shared goals.
- **Protect** the safety and experience of patrons, artists, staff, and volunteers.
- **Ensure** compliance with laws, contracts, labor agreements, safety standards, and internal policies.
- **Oversee** stewardship of the historic building in partnership with the City and other public partners.
- **Maintain** strong relationships with the City of Bellingham and the Bellingham-Whatcom Public Facilities District.
- **Plan** for capital needs and long-term care of the facility.
- **Ensure** Mount Baker Theatre has the systems, staffing, and resources needed to deliver high-quality events.

Financial Performance and Revenue

- **Lead** the annual budget process and long-range financial planning.
- **Work** with the Finance Director to provide clear and timely financial reports.
- **Strengthen** forecasting, cash planning, and financial oversight.
- **Protect** reserves and other organizational assets.
- **Align** spending with Mount Baker Theatre's mission and priorities.
- **Review** financial performance across programming, operations, development, and capital projects.
- **Develop** and **begin** executing a fundraising plan for the Centennial Campaign.
- **Strengthen** the case for support and build a qualified donor pipeline.
- **Clarify** fundraising roles for the Executive Director, Board, and development team.
- **Build** relationships with major donors and sponsors.
- **Increase** unrestricted support.
- **Support** planned giving and long-term endowment growth.
- **Balance** artistic goals, community access, and financial performance.



Mission, Vision, and Strategy

- **Serve** as Mount Baker Theatre's primary public representative.
- **Build** relationships with donors, civic and business leaders, public partners, arts organizations, educators, patrons, and community groups.
- **Conduct** a listening process with the Board, staff, and key community partners.
- **Use** that input to articulate a clear vision for Mount Baker Theatre's next chapter.
- **Turn** Mount Baker Theatre's mission and vision into focused priorities and measurable goals.
- **Set** direction across programming, audience development, fundraising, community engagement, and stewardship of the historic venue.
- **Expand** the Theatre's reach while respecting its history and current audience.
- **Strengthen** Mount Baker Theatre's role as a cultural leader, downtown anchor, and community gathering place.
- **Represent** the Theatre at public events, donor meetings, civic discussions, and community gatherings.

Board Governance

- **Partner** with the Board of Directors to advance Mount Baker Theatre's mission and long-term goals.
- **Keep** the Board informed about finances, fundraising, operations, risk, and major decisions.
- **Provide** clear, accurate, and timely reporting.
- **Help** the Board focus on governance, strategy, fundraising, and executive oversight.
- **Create** clear channels for communication between the Board and staff.
- **Build** trust through direct communication and consistent follow-through.
- **Support** the Board in setting annual goals for the Executive Director.
- **Help** Board members understand their role in philanthropy and community engagement.
- **Support** Board recruitment, orientation, and engagement as needed.



Required Experience

- Senior leadership experience in a complex public-facing organization.
- Leadership in a performing arts, cultural, live-event, venue, civic, hospitality, or related organization.
- Responsibility for a multimillion-dollar budget.
- Experience with budgeting, forecasting, financial reporting, and risk management.
- Fundraising experience that includes major gifts, sponsorships, capital campaigns, or other forms of contributed revenue.
- Experience working with a nonprofit Board of Directors.
- Experience leading senior staff across several functions.
- A record of building a healthy and accountable workplace.
- Experience setting direction and delivering measurable results.
- Success building relationships with donors,

civic leaders, business partners, public officials, and community organizations.

- Strong public speaking and written communication skills.
- The ability to manage competing views and public attention.
- A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and senior leadership experience.

Preferred Experience

- Experience working with public agencies, municipal partners, or public-private structures.
- Knowledge of venue operations, event economics, audience development, and public-assembly facilities.
- Experience with capital campaigns, planned giving, or endowment development.
- Experience caring for a historic or publicly owned facility.

Direct experience leading a performing arts organization is preferred. Strong candidates may also come from related cultural, civic, hospitality, venue, or live-event settings.



Key Attributes

- Mission-driven: Values the power of live performance and the role a theatre can play in community life.
- Strategic: Sets direction, chooses priorities, and turns plans into results.
- Outward-facing: Enjoys building relationships with donors, civic leaders, business leaders, public partners, artists, and patrons.
- Collaborative: Respects the skill and experience of others and listens before acting.
- Decisive: Makes difficult decisions when needed, explains them clearly, and follows through.
- Financially grounded: Understands budgets, risk, and the need for long-term financial health.
- Emotionally intelligent: Reads people well, handles conflict directly, and stays calm under pressure.
- Politically aware: Works effectively across the Board, staff, City, public partners, donors, and community groups.
- Inclusive: Values different audiences, backgrounds, and points of view.
- Trustworthy: Builds confidence through honesty, consistency, and sound judgment.
- Respectful of history: Understands the Theatre's legacy and its place in Bellingham.
- Open to new ideas: Tests new approaches when they support the mission.
- Visible and credible: Represents the Theatre with confidence in public and private settings.
- Good-humored and grounded: Brings warmth, perspective, and a sense of humor to demanding work.



Compensation and Location

- This is a full-time, on-site role based in Bellingham, Washington.
- The Executive Director will attend selected evening and weekend performances, donor events, Board meetings, and community gatherings.
- The salary is \$180,000.
- Relocation assistance will be provided.

Benefits include:

- Medical, dental, and vision insurance.
- Life and disability insurance.
- Paid vacation and sick leave.
- Retirement benefits.
- Other employee benefits offered by Mount Baker Theatre.

LOCATION :

Mount Baker Theatre | Bellingham, Washington

To Apply

Herd Freed Hartz is leading this search for Mount Baker Theatre.

For confidential inquiries or to express interest, contact:

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