



CHIEF PHILANTHROPY OFFICER

[SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY](#)

San Francisco, California



The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with the San Francisco Symphony in the search for a Chief Philanthropy Officer.

The Chief Philanthropy Officer will set the institutional vision for the San Francisco Symphony's philanthropic efforts as it seeks to achieve its earned, contributed, and endowment revenue goals; expand its footprint in the Bay Area and beyond; and establish a superior patron experience. In partnership with the Chief Executive Officer, President, Board of Governors, and Senior Leadership Team, the Chief Philanthropy Officer will create and implement strategies that generate and maximize contributed income that supports the mission, strategy, and priorities of the San Francisco Symphony. The Chief Philanthropy Officer will identify, cultivate, and secure strategic gifts—engaging top donor prospects, inspiring volunteers, promoting the symphonic art form, and motivating a team to maximize donor growth. The Chief Philanthropy Officer will maintain open and ongoing communication with Board leadership, providing complete and accurate activity reports, revenue forecasts, and situation analyses on a regular basis. The Chief Philanthropy Officer also will lead efforts to support comprehensive capital campaigns and strategic funding projects. The Chief Philanthropy Officer will serve as an ambassador of the San Francisco Symphony, articulating clear and compelling cases for funding symphonic performances, arts education programs, and community engagement initiatives, ensuring the growth and vitality of one of San Francisco's premier performing arts institutions.

Following the devastating earthquake of 1906, San Francisco's leaders needed to rebuild the city's cultural life. The San Francisco Symphony was created to do just that. Since its first concert in December 1911, the Symphony has been thrilling audiences with orchestral performances and serving the Bay Area through music education programs.

The San Francisco Symphony is now widely considered to be among the most artistically adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. This relentless pursuit of progress is fueled by the vision of being a leader and catalyst for reimagining how people everywhere engage with orchestral music in deep and meaningful ways. The San Francisco Symphony is driven by its mission to inspire and serve audiences and communities throughout the Bay Area and the world through the power of musical performance.

In October 2020, the San Francisco Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its twelfth Music Director, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape. Together, Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of cultural disciplines: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers, along with Salonen and the San Francisco

Symphony, have set out to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners' unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas.

The San Francisco Symphony is a leader in music education, providing the most extensive education and community programs offered by any American orchestra. Through a variety of programs, the Symphony brings music into classrooms K–12 throughout, in the San Francisco Unified School District and the Bay Area, free of charge. These programs include *Adventures in Music*, which has been bringing music to every child in grades one through five in the San Francisco public schools since 1988; *Concerts for Kids* which ensure that more than 35,000 students from Northern California hear the San Francisco Symphony each year; and *Music and Mentors*, which puts professional musicians into middle and high schools across the city to coach students weekly. Comprehensive online music education resources are also provided that can be used by children and families at home.

Beyond the classrooms, the Symphony works to develop the next generation of groundbreaking musicians through the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (SFSYO), which provides no cost, pre-professional training to gifted young musicians in the Bay Area. The SFSYO has been touring the world for the past few decades, earning a reputation as one of the finest youth ensembles in the world.

The San Francisco Symphony works to ensure music is both accessible and enjoyed by its entire community. During difficult times, the Symphony helps heal through music, hosting benefit concerts or simply playing for free to bring people together. And utilizing technology, the Symphony reaches homes across the country, enriching American musical life.

It is not only the devotion to promoting music and music education that sets the San Francisco Symphony apart. The San Francisco Symphony has won some of the world's most prestigious recording awards, including Japan's Record Academy Award, France's Grand Prix du Disque, and Britain's *Gramophone* Award. Plus, numerous Grammy® Awards—twelve with Michael Tilson Thomas, the Symphony's first Music Director Laureate who completed his twenty-five-year tenure in 2020.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Chief Philanthropy Officer will report to the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Spivey and serve on the Senior Leadership Team. The Chief Philanthropy Officer will work closely with the Board of Governors and will serve as the lead staff liaison to the Development Committee and Committee on Governors. The Chief Philanthropy Officer will oversee a team of twenty-six staff.

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The San Francisco Symphony is uniquely positioned in one of the most creative and forward-looking places in the world. This is a place where rules are broken, and new ideas are born. It is the ideal context in which to reimagine orchestral music, experiment with the concert experience, and build relationships with new artists and new audiences. Moreover, the SFS is at a pivotal point in its history where the culture of the board, staff, musicians, donors, and audiences are hungry for the evolution of the artform. Our mindset is the relentless pursuit of creativity, fostering curiosity, and the cultivation of human connection. Our opportunity is to create something bold, new, and inspiring and the Chief Philanthropy Officer will play a leading role in authoring the next chapter of the San Francisco Symphony.

—Matthew Spivey, Interim Chief Executive Officer

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The San Francisco Symphony strives to be an organization that listens to, includes, cares for, and serves all stakeholders through thoughtful inclusion. It commits to an ongoing process of transformation and growth, seeking a balance between the deliberate, long-term nature of this work and the urgency of what it is trying to accomplish. The San Francisco Symphony seeks to hold itself accountable to making changes through the articulation of specific goals and strategies with actions in its comprehensive DEI Plan.

As recently expressed by the leadership of the SFS:

Art can inspire societal progress through the creative expression of the human experience. An orchestra is one of the most expressive and malleable musical organisms, capable of evolving and transforming in ways that are limited only by imagination. Artistic expression is a defining human characteristic capable of unlocking imagination and enabling progress. Creativity and artistic expression are not bound by race, religion, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, economic status, education, or any other categorization. They are innate human qualities within all people that can be discovered, unlocked, developed, and celebrated.

A commitment to a more inclusive and equitable culture can unlock the enormous potential within the San Francisco Symphony to become more creative, soar to new heights of artistic growth, evolve and innovate in unimaginable ways, and to eventually become an important part of the cultural landscape for many, many more people. The San Francisco Symphony is uniquely positioned to move beyond traditional modes of thinking; embrace principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and evolve into an organization that is not only creative, but also humanitarian.

—Matthew Spivey, Interim Chief Executive Officer,
Esa-Pekka Salonen, Music Director, and
Prisca Geeslin, President

The San Francisco Symphony is committed to cultivating an environment of inclusion, equity, and diversity for its staff, musicians, patrons, and community. As leaders and innovators of its inherited tradition of orchestral music, it acknowledges its responsibility to identify and dismantle the oppressive barriers that it has historically maintained. It resolves to hold itself accountable, devote resources, and embrace change by centering racial equity and listening to and learning from marginalized voices.

SFS recognizes that this is an ongoing, sometimes uncomfortable practice, and continue to learn and evolve. It welcomes applicants who are enthusiastic to join it on this journey.

LEADERSHIP

Matthew Spivey

Interim Chief Executive Officer

Matthew Spivey joined the San Francisco Symphony in 2015 and was appointed Interim Chief Executive Officer in August 2021. In his prior role as Chief Programming Officer, Spivey was instrumental in the appointment and launch of conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as the Orchestra's twelfth Music Director, shaping a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape.

Since the introduction of the San Francisco Symphony's groundbreaking artistic leadership model in 2020, Spivey has worked closely with Salonen and the Orchestra's eight Collaborative Partners—Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and Esperanza Spalding—to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners' unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert

formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas.

As San Francisco Symphony Director of Artistic Planning from 2015–2019, Spivey worked with Music Director Laureate Michael Tilson Thomas in setting the Orchestra’s artistic direction, overseeing programming for the Orchestra’s 31-week subscription season, recording projects, commissioning programs, the SF Symphony Chorus, tours, festivals, and providing artistic direction for the SF Symphony’s 200+ concerts and presentations each season.

Before joining the San Francisco Symphony in 2015, Spivey served as the Vice President and General Manager of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. In that role, Spivey managed all aspects of artistic planning and concert production with oversight of Education and Public Relations activity. Prior to becoming Vice President and General Manager, Spivey served as Vice President of Artistic Operations for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra since 2010. Spivey previously held positions with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. He studied clarinet at the New England Conservatory.

Esa-Pekka Salonen

Music Director

Esa-Pekka Salonen is known as both a composer and conductor. He is currently the Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony. He is the Conductor Laureate for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009, the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he was Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor from 2008 until 2021, and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. As a member of the faculty of LA's Colburn School, he develops, leads, and directs the pre-professional Negaunee Conducting Program. Salonen co-founded—and from 2003 until 2018 served as the Artistic Director for—the annual Baltic Sea Festival, which invites celebrated artists to promote unity and ecological awareness among the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Salonen is known for his enthusiastic adoption of emerging technology. His projects have included the Philharmonia’s *Virtual Orchestra*, the award-winning *RE-RITE* and *Universe of Sound* immersive installations, and the much-hailed app for iPad, *The Orchestra*. In 2015 he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education, and in 2020, his interactive AI opera installation *Laila*, presented with the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, was awarded the Fedora Digital Prize.

As Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for seventeen years, Salonen is widely credited with revitalizing the organization. He was instrumental in helping the orchestra open Walt Disney Concert Hall; presided over countless premieres of contemporary works; began the Esa-Pekka Salonen Commissions Fund and made the orchestra one of the best-attended and funded in the country. Maintaining his close ties with the Los Angeles musical community, he is a frequent and celebrated guest of both the Philharmonic and the Colburn Orchestra.

Salonen has an extensive and varied recording career, both as a conductor and composer. His recent recordings include Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*, recorded with Lise Davidsen and the Philharmonia Orchestra; Bartók’s *Miraculous Mandarin* and *Dance Suite*, also with the Philharmonia; Stravinsky’s *Persephone*, featuring Andrew Staples, Pauline Chevallier, and the Finnish National Opera, and a 2018 box set of his complete Sony recordings. His compositions appear on releases from Sony, Deutsche Grammophon, and Decca; his Piano Concerto (with Yefim Bronfman), Violin Concerto (with Leila Jofesowicz), and Cello Concerto (with Yo-Yo Ma) all appear on recordings conducted by Salonen himself. Salonen is the recipient of many major awards, including the UNESCO Rostrum Prize for his work *Floof* in 1992, and the Siena Prize, given by the Accademia Chigiana, in 1993; he is the first conductor to receive

it. In 1995 he received the Royal Philharmonic Society's Opera Award and two years later, its Conductor Award. Salonen was awarded the Litteris et Artibus medal, one of Sweden's highest honors, by the King of Sweden in 1996. In 1998 the French government awarded him the rank of Officier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In addition to receiving both the Pro Finlandia Medal of the Order of the Lion of Finland and the Helsinki Medal, he was named Commander, First Class of the Order of the Lion of Finland by the President of Finland. *Musical America* named him its Musician of the Year in 2006, and he was elected an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2010. His Violin Concerto won the 2012 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition. He was the recipient of the 2014 Nemmers Composition Prize, which included a residency at the Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University and performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In 2020, he was appointed an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) by the Queen of England. To date, he has received seven honorary doctorates in four different countries.

Priscilla B. "Prisca" Geeslin

President

Priscilla B. "Prisca" Geeslin was elected President of the San Francisco Symphony in December 2020 and has been a member of the San Francisco Symphony Board of Governors since 1998. She most recently served the Symphony as Vice-President of the Board of Governors, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Governors, and a member of board committees overseeing Development, Finance, Executive, and Artistic Policy. Geeslin's twenty-five years of leadership and support include a deep commitment to the Orchestra's education and community building programs, including the establishment of the Geeslin Family Fund for Community Engagement. She has chaired some of the San Francisco Symphony's most important fundraising events including Opening Gala and Deck the Hall. Geeslin currently serves on the boards of the American Conservatory Theater (Vice-Chair), Grace Cathedral, and NARAL Pro-Choice America Foundation (Board Chair). She also has served on the boards of SFArtsED and the French American International School. Her husband, Keith Geeslin, is President of San Francisco Opera and Episcopal Community Services.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Philanthropy Officer will

- lead, build, inspire, and continue to grow the Symphony's high-caliber team of fundraising, professionals by establishing an environment that emphasizes and reinforces departmental goals, productivity, accountability, professionalism, creativity, communication, collaboration, kindness, and teamwork;
- provide the strategic vision, design, and implementation of a comprehensive strategic development plan to maximize the short-term and long-term fundraising potential of artistic, education, and community and capital programs, and take the Symphony's fundraising to new levels of success;
- build strong and mutually beneficial relationships among the Chief Executive Officer, President, Board of Governors, Music Director, and the Orchestra, and other staff members and external stakeholders including donors, subscribers, and business and civic leaders;
- work in partnership with the Symphony's leadership team in setting robust but achievable goals with metrics that promote greater accountability;
- establish performance measures, monitor results, and evaluate the effectiveness of the development program, making changes as appropriate;
- be recognized as a committed, valued, and collegial leader among board, musicians, and staff;
- foster a culture of trust-based relationships across all Symphony stakeholders;

- model, inspire, and implement effective donor-centric cultivation, recognition, and stewardship activities;
- drive strategy and oversee implementation of special fundraising events with a focus on ROI;
- lead endowment and capital campaign efforts, including selecting and working with campaign consultants and galvanizing support from the Board and donor communities;
- utilize best and emerging practices in not-for-profit governance to support an engaged, diverse Board of Governors that contributes at the uppermost level of giving in the city, and that functions as a high-performing governance body;
- lead an effective prospect research program, continuing to build a systematic effort to increase donor base;
- develop and rigorously manage the development budget for strong return on investment; and
- represent the San Francisco Symphony at public functions and events.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The San Francisco Symphony seeks a Chief Philanthropy Officer with

- a commitment to the mission of the San Francisco Symphony—to inspire and serve audiences and communities throughout the Bay Area and the world through the power of musical performance;
- experience as a member of an executive management team of a complex organization, including experience working closely with administrative staff, engaged boards, volunteers, and other key constituents;
- an ability to lead, inspire, motivate, hire, and retain teams that achieve excellence and exceed goals;
- experience setting and exceeding ambitious philanthropic goals;
- capital campaign leadership experience including success in planning, managing, and implementing a multi-year campaign;
- experience as a successful front-line cultivator and solicitor of transformational, major, principal, and planned gifts;
- experience fostering, enhancing, and expanding relationships with donors over time while attracting and engaging new supporters;
- a deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of one's work and a desire to embed the SFS's DEI values and principles into the team's processes and goals;
- a confident, flexible, and collaborative leadership style accompanied by strategic thinking, innovation, integrity, and political astuteness;
- confidence, gravitas, and credibility;
- financial management skills with experience in budget analysis, forecasting, and planning;
- excellent communication skills with an ability to engage, inspire, and persuade using strong written, verbal, and presentation skills;
- a high degree of technological proficiency, including experience with donor management and arts enterprise applications, particularly Tessitura; and
- knowledge of current and emerging trends in philanthropy and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Candidates must have at least seven years of senior-level experience leading successful fundraising programs.

SALARY & BENEFITS

San Francisco Symphony offers a competitive salary and comprehensive package of benefits.

LOCATION

This position is based in San Francisco, California.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should be responsive to the mission of the San Francisco Symphony as well as the responsibilities and qualifications stated in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit:

[Chief Philanthropy Officer, San Francisco Symphony.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Anne Johnson:

[annejohnson@aspenleadershipgroup.com.](mailto:annejohnson@aspenleadershipgroup.com)

All inquiries will be held in confidence.