

## Chicago Humanities Festival Artistic Director

***The Chicago Humanities Festival seeks an experienced, visionary professional to shape its thoughtful, entertaining programs with contemporary thought-leaders, and grow its diverse and engaged audience.***

*The Artistic Director is envisioned as an experienced cultural producer, innovator and promoter who is immersed in the arts, humanities and current events. This leader will shape programs that explore and celebrate timeless issues for Chicago and online audiences, and will have a keen understanding of contemporary approaches to programming and audience engagement, partnership building, and both earned and contributed revenue streams.*

### **OVERVIEW**

**The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF) presents vital civic and cultural conversations on the most compelling topics of our time through smart, engaging events and programs.** For over 30 years the Festival has hosted compelling conversations with fascinating individuals who deeply consider our past, present, and future through the multiple lenses of the arts, humanities and social sciences. Insightful, entertaining and interactive, Festival events are a platform for authors, journalists, scholars, policy makers and other thought leaders, as well as for artists, actors, musicians, comedians and cultural figures. The Festival facilitates audience engagement with Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer Prize-winners, MacArthur Fellows, and Oscar, Tony, and Grammy Award-winning artists—individuals at the forefront of their fields sharing new insights into the human condition.

**CHF has established itself as a vital member of Chicago’s cultural community, and believes that the humanities and public dialogue are essential to cultivating a vibrant civil society.**

In addition to longstanding relationships with the City’s civic, cultural, and educational communities, the Festival has strong national partners and networks in the arts, humanities, higher education, media and publishing. Thoughtfully curated Spring and Fall seasons annually attract 50,000 people to 90+ in-person programs. CHF also has an extensive online presence, including over 100,000 YouTube subscribers. Potential for programmatic creativity, new partnerships and expansion is strong.

**The Festival is committed to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion across every aspect of the institution.** It is dedicated to diverse and inclusive participation in its programs, neighborhood-based partnerships (specifically on Chicago’s South Side in Bronzeville, Hyde Park, Englewood, and South Shore), and cultivating a society in which social justice and equity are paramount. Currently just over half of the Festival’s audience is 60+ years of age and 23% identify as BIPOC/ALAANA. A key strategic priority is focusing audience development efforts on younger, diverse and intellectually curious attendees.

### **THE OPPORTUNITY**

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Artistic Director: is responsible for articulating and advancing the Festival’s programmatic vision; manages and expands key relationships with a variety of external partners; creates Chicago-focused programs highlighting its diverse neighborhoods; oversees the Programming Team; and is a primary liaison with the Board Program Committee. Strong candidates must understand the broader cultural landscape, have a finger on the pulse of contemporary tastes, be able to connect programming to earned and contributed revenue streams and understand today’s cultural audiences (knowledge of the Chicago community a plus).

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Program Strategy and Vision**

- Expand the Festival’s visibility via programmatic innovation strengthening its reputation as a distinctive, thought-provoking and entertaining forum for ideas and community.
- Develop ambitious multi-year program plans, special projects and partnerships that expand the Festival’s impact and strengthen its programmatic brand.
- Oversee the Program Team’s curation of 90+ topically balanced annual events, including a robust series of high-profile “tentpole” programs that attract broad public interest and media attention.
- Ensure programming appeals to a broad Chicago cultural audience, drives initial trial, and encourages repeat visitation; shape a range of events to specifically attract and nurture a new generation of younger, more diverse, culturally-engaged audiences.
- Develop programmatic themes and topical event series that illuminate a diversity of thought around critical contemporary subjects, presenting thought leaders with differing perspectives and surfacing novel conversations and insights.
- Work with a variety of Festival teams to continually enhance the distinctive, social nature of the Festival’s Fall and Spring seasons.
- Periodically engage high-profile guest curators (e.g. authors, journalists, academics) to access new ideas and networks, test new approaches to audience engagement, and consider novel event formats.

**Leadership, Management and Ambassadorship**

- Reporting to the Executive Director, and in conversation with the Board Program Committee and Director of Programming, ensure the Festival’s overall program advances its strategic priorities.
- Inspire a Programming Team of 4 accomplished full-time professionals (Director of Programming, 2 Programmers, 1 Coordinator), seasonal fellows/interns, guest curators. Work with Director of Programming (who has daily supervisory responsibility of the Programming Team and booking), to plan Spring and Fall Seasons, and periodic large-scale or multi-year efforts.
- Develop, steward and serve as primary lead on a range of critical institutional partnerships, including program partnerships on Chicago’s South Side, working with an array of neighborhood-based institutions and community leaders.
- Serve as a primary Festival ambassador in Chicago’s cultural community. Routinely engage with key donors and Board members (including at all Board and Program Committee meetings)). Serve as a host and primary speaker for select donor-specific events (e.g. member previews, salons, donor receptions).
- Develop powerful and distinctive events and program narratives in collaboration with the Directors of Production/Audience Experience and Marketing/Communications.
- Identify creative opportunities to expand the Festival’s earned and contributed income, with the Directors of Development, Finance & Operations, and Institutional Partnerships.

## **CANDIDATE PROFILE AND QUALIFICATIONS**

The ideal candidate will have the following qualities, experience and qualifications:

### **Program and Content Curation**

- Strong programming, production and management experience working in one (or many) of the following fields: cultural/media festivals, broadcast/news media, higher-education and the public humanities, performing arts/theater, libraries, civic convenings.
- Extensive background working across a diverse range of topics and public programming an advantage, as is intimate knowledge of contemporary trends and developments in civil/cultural discourse and the broader media landscape.
- A passion for connecting the public with the world of ideas and a successful track record of program innovation, excellence, and delivering exceptional experiences.
- Being intellectually curious, with experience working with individuals who are prominent in their respective fields of endeavor.

### **Relationship-Building**

- A team player and team builder who works with consistency, integrity and trust; a good listener, who is collaborative and comfortable receiving input from multiple sources; an ability to disagree without being disagreeable; enjoys working in close collaboration with an Executive Director and an engaged Board and Staff.
- Ability to connect and work successfully with a broad spectrum of individuals (artists, authors, and thought leaders; program partners and community leaders; members, donors and funders; managers and booking agents) and to navigate diverse personalities and priorities.
- Demonstrated ability to forge effective and mutually respectful relationships with a diverse group of individuals and institutions; a track record as an effective advocate for one's current/past organizations.
- Adept at planning, prioritizing, and following through; a hard worker with a high energy level who welcomes accountability.

### **Communications**

- Exceptional oral and written communication skills, including small group and large-scale public speaking.
- Ability and interest to lead thoughtful public conversations and interviews with Festival guests a plus.

***The Artistic Director will advance the Festival's DEAI commitments. Central to the role is the ability to present a diverse array of interesting perspectives and presenters, in ways that include and engage people of all walks of life and identities.***

For more information please contact:

**Lee Kappelman**

(202) 803-6674 or [leek@mOppenheim.com](mailto:leek@mOppenheim.com)

**Oscar Quiros**

(415) 762-2643 or [Oscarq@mOppenheim.com](mailto:Oscarq@mOppenheim.com)

**Mark Oppenheim**

(415) 762-2640 or [marko@mOppenheim.com](mailto:marko@mOppenheim.com)

**m/Oppenheim Executive Search**

558 Presidio Boulevard, Box 29625,  
San Francisco, CA 94129-0625