



Director of Advancement

Glencoe, IL

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Founder + CEO

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Chicago | Cincinnati | Columbus | New York | Los Angeles | Washington, DC

About Writers Theatre

Writers Theatre boldly looks to the future as it begins its 32nd season. Having captivated audiences for years with its dedication to creating the most intimate theatrical experience possible, the theatre is now a major Chicagoland cultural destination with a national reputation for excellence, being called “America’s finest regional theater company” by The Wall Street Journal. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Braden Abraham and Executive Director Kathryn M. Lipuma, the company is charting a path forward for the next 30 years.

Since its founding in 1992, Writers Theatre has stayed true to its core values: valuing the power of the written word and uplifting the artists who bring that word to life. The company has produced over 140 productions—everything from inventive interpretations of classics to groundbreaking new work. In 2016, Writers Theatre opened a new, state-of-the-art facility designed by the internationally renowned [Studio Gang Architects](#). The new facility has allowed the Theatre to accommodate its growing audience, while maintaining its trademark intimacy.

Writers Theatre now welcomes more than 60,000 patrons each season and has helped establish the North Shore of Chicago as a premier cultural destination. Through its Literary Development Initiative, which has been responsible for the nurturing and premiering of over 30 world premieres, the theatre has established itself as a major originator of new theatrical works. Serving as an extension of the Writers Theatre mission, WT Education programs engage an average 10,000 students each year with active learning opportunities centered around the written word.

Mission

Writers Theatre’s mission is to create intimate connections through astonishing performances and innovative programs; by activating relationships between artists and community; and by inviting people to gather in our spaces for transformative experiences.

Values

Lead with the art.

- » We believe inspiration starts with the word on the page and the shared experience of actors and audiences.
- » We embrace the power and elasticity of language to transport us, challenge us, and invite us to reflect on our lives and the lives of others.
- » We follow our strongest artistic instincts, delight in curiosity, cultivate empathy, and foster an engaged creative process for all involved.
- » We commit to continued artistic excellence, cultural vitality, and sharing productions and programs that start conversation.

Build a connected community.

- » We offer a welcoming space to gather.
- » We deepen experiences through exceptional education and engagement programs.
- » We uphold an accessible and inclusive environment rooted in respect for all.

Nurture organizational culture, health, and equity.

- » We work together as a team to ensure our workplace centers diversity, generosity, and trust.
- » We commit to the responsible and effective management of all organizational resources to ensure healthy operations, and to preserve ongoing assets into the future.

Organizational History

Writers Theatre was founded in 1992 to create an environment where the written word and the nurturing of artists were the foundation of all productions. The company was launched in the back room of Books on Vernon, a newly opened bookstore in the village of Glencoe on the North Shore of Chicago, by Co-Founders Michael Halberstam and Marilyn Campbell-Lowe. Halberstam served as Founding Artistic Director through 2021. The limited space available gave way to a new aesthetic that has been a company hallmark ever since: intimacy.

The “theatre in the back of a bookstore” became a welcome addition to the already vibrant Chicago arts community and quickly established a reputation as a home for world-class art and artists. A second performance space opened in the Woman’s Library Club building in 2003 and continued the company’s trademark level of intimacy while allowing for new programming and educational opportunities. In 2016, Writers Theatre opened a new, state-of-the-art facility in downtown Glencoe, designed by the award-winning, internationally renowned Studio Gang Architects, led by Founder and Design Principal Jeanne Gang, FAIA, in collaboration with Theatre Consultant Auerbach Pollock Friedlander. The new facility established the company’s first permanent home and has allowed the Theatre to continue to grow to accommodate its audience, while maintaining its trademark intimacy.

Acclaimed by *The Wall Street Journal* as one of the top half-dozen regional theatres in the country, Writers has offered more than 140 productions and garnered numerous awards and accolades, including 172 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations and 33 Awards. Among the many notable productions in WT history are the world premiere of *Trevor the Musical* by Dan Collins and Julianne Wick Davis, which subsequently enjoyed an Off-Broadway run in 2021; Braden Abraham’s revival of *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl; Katie Spelman and Matt Deitchman’s staging of *Once*; David Cromer’s stagings of *Picnic* by William Inge, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams and *Next to Normal* by Brian Yorkey and Tom Kitt; Ron OJ Parson’s stagings of *East Texas Hot Links* by Eugene Lee, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* by August Wilson and *Stick Fly* by Lydia Diamond; Kimberly Senior’s stagings of *Hedda Gabler*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Marjorie Prime* by Jordan Harrison; William Brown’s stagings of *A Little Night Music*, *The Liar* by David Ives, and *Company*; the world premiere of *A Minister’s Wife* by Austin Pendleton, Jan Levy Tranen and Josh Schmidt, conceived and directed by Michael Halberstam; the American premiere of Conor McPherson’s *The Dance of Death*; PigPen Theatre Co.’s *The Old Man and the Old Moon* and the world premiere of *The Hunter and the Bear*; the Chicago premieres of Eleanor

Burgess's *The Niceties*, Qui Nguyen's *Vietgone*, Lydia Diamond's *Smart People* and Itamar Moses and David Yazbek's *The Band's Visit*; *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard, the inaugural production in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre; and the world premiere of *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf: A Parody*, the inaugural production in The Gillian Theatre.

The Literary Development Initiative (LDI) began in 2004 as a new work development program committed to commissioning, developing, and producing new plays, musicals, and adaptations. Each season, the LDI holds readings and workshops of new projects in various stages of development, tailoring the developmental process to meet the needs of each work. Projects that have emerged from the LDI include the world premieres of *Crime & Punishment* by Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus; *The Savannah Disputation* by Evan Smith; *Old Glory* and *Do the Hustle* by Brett Neveu; *The Detective's Wife* by Keith Huff; *Days Like Today* by Laura Eason and Alan Schmuckler; the English version of *Quixote: On the Conquest of Self* by Claudio Valdes Kuri, Monica Hoth and Georgina Escobar; *Witch* by Jen Silverman; *Dishwasher Dreams* by Alaudin Ullah; *Wife of a Salesman* by Eleanor Burgess; *Pearl's Rollin' with the Blues* by Felicia P. Fields and Ron OJ Parson; and *Manual Cinema's Christmas Carol*.

In 2005, Writers Theatre expanded its programming to include education initiatives aimed at closing the arts education gap in Chicagoland schools. WT Education's comprehensive in-school, on-site and community-based initiatives emphasize collaboration, cultivate self-expression, encourage imaginative inquiry, and promote civic responsibility. These innovative programs engage nearly 10,000 students and community members each year, approximately 90% of whom live and/or attend school in under-resourced areas. WT Education continues to evolve with its teacher partners, teaching artists and inspiring students.

In 2023 Writers Theatre welcomed Braden Abraham as Artistic Director, joining Executive Director Kathryn M. Lipuma as co-leaders of WT.

Position Summary

Writers Theatre seeks a committed and resourceful Director of Advancement (DOA) who will be responsible for procuring and growing WT's donor base to ensure the organization's long-term stability. Reporting to the Executive Director and working closely with both the Executive and Artistic Directors and the Board of Trustees, the DOA oversees a staff of five and is an integral member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The DOA will be responsible for achieving budgeted goals in all areas of contributed revenue, including government, foundation, corporate, individual, and special events. WT's fundraising efforts include an Annual Plan to raise \$3 million each year to sustain annual operations and a Legacy Project to raise capital/reserve/endowment to ensure the long-term success of WT.

Essential Job Functions

The Director of Advancement's primary responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- » Develop, communicate, and implement a Fundraising Plan to secure and achieve annual fundraising goals.
- » Lead and manage the Development staff, establish achievable goals to hold the team accountable, and conduct regular performance evaluations.
- » Lead the strategies and gift solicitations from individual, foundation, corporate, and government sources.
- » Maintain an active portfolio of major donors and prospects. The DOA will spend significant time on major gift development, cultivation, solicitation, and the stewardship of major donors.
- » Act as a strategic partner to the Executive Director, Artistic Director, and Board of Trustees to support and advise on their fundraising activities.
- » Work closely with staff, Board, and other volunteers to maximize the effectiveness of special events, including the annual *Wordplay* Gala, to attract and retain donors.
- » Prepare and manage the department's financial reports and budget and provide fiscal oversight to meet revenue goals.
- » Participate and report at Executive Committee and Board meetings.
- » Oversee the Trustee Governance and Advancement Committees of the Board of Trustees and others as assigned.
- » In collaboration with Leadership and the Board of Trustees, develop, communicate, and implement a multi-year plan to raise funds for a Legacy Project to raise capital/reserve/endowment to ensure the long-term success of WT.
- » Establish and support a Planned Giving Program.
- » Attend WT programming and development events as needed.
- » Other duties may be assigned.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will possess most of the following qualifications:

- » At least eight years of fundraising experience.
- » Strong leadership and administration skills, with experience in managing staff.
- » A proven track record of participating in securing major gifts (5-6 figures). Prior experience as a Director of Development/Advancement and prior experience in campaign fundraising is a plus.

- » The ability to establish rapport with high-level donors and trustees, to work effectively with volunteers and staff, and an eagerness to take an active, public role in cultivating and soliciting donors and serve as a representative of WT.
- » An interest in theater and the arts; an understanding of and desire to support WT's mission.
- » An existing knowledge of, or ability to quickly learn Chicagoland's arts and culture philanthropic landscape. Knowledge of the North Shore is a plus.
- » Outstanding interpersonal, verbal, and written communication skills in order to respond effectively and diplomatically to donors and stakeholders and engage a diverse set of patrons.
- » Superior organizational skills are essential, with the ability to balance the many challenges and opportunities inherent in a live arts environment.
- » A bachelor's degree or equivalent relevant experience is required.

Leadership + Key Colleagues

(Please do not contact the organization or its leaders directly)

Kathryn M. Lipuma Executive Director

Kate Lipuma has served as the Executive Director of Writers Theatre since March 2007 where she is responsible for overseeing all management, administration and operations for the company. Most recently, she led the planning and construction of WT's award-winning performing arts center, designed by internationally renowned architect and MacArthur Fellow and "Genius" grant recipient Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang Architects, which opened in February 2016. Prior to Writers, Lipuma spent nine seasons as Executive Director at the Tony Award-winning Signature Theatre Company in New York. At Signature, she worked with and produced plays and programs from such acclaimed writers as Edward Albee, Lee Blessing, Horton Foote, Maria Irene Fornés, John Guare, Bill Irwin, Romulus Linney, Arthur Miller, Paula Vogel, August Wilson and Lanford Wilson. During her tenure, she helped create and launch Signature's groundbreaking \$15 Ticket Program.

Prior to her time at Signature, she spent six years with Chicago's Goodman Theatre. Lipuma currently serves on the Board of Directors for Arts Alliance Illinois, the statewide advocacy coalition; the Board of Directors and Past Chair of the League of Chicago Theatres, an alliance representing more than 200 Chicago-area theater companies and producers; and as an Advisory Council Member for The Actors Fund. Lipuma is the Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Directors of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre. She is also the co-creator of DoNorth, an umbrella organization joining four cultural neighbors—Chicago Botanic Garden, Kohl Children's Museum, Ravinia Festival and Writers Theatre—to attract new audiences to the cultural, environmental and community activities of the North Shore. She is a graduate of The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Braden Abraham Artistic Director

Braden Abraham joined Writers Theatre as Artistic Director in 2023. He comes to Writers from Seattle Rep, the largest resident theatre in the Pacific Northwest, where he advanced the organization as a director and producer, including the development and premiere of many new plays. He directed six world premieres for Seattle Rep and over 20 productions including: *True West*, *Clybourne Park*, *Photograph 51*, *Ibsen in Chicago*, *Betrayal*, *Luna Gale*, *A View from the Bridge*, *A Great Wilderness*, *Breakin' Hearts and Takin' Names*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Among his initiatives as Artistic Director, Braden committed Seattle Rep as one of the first partner theaters to bring the Public Theater's model for the Public Works program across the country. Seattle Rep's Public Works strengthens community connection through making ambitious productions of participatory theater. Braden also re-envisioned the New Play Program, commissioning and premiering plays by Anna Zeigler, Samuel D. Hunter, David Grimm, Justin Huertas, Samantha Silva, Cheryl L. West, and Karen Hartman, and supported the work of dozens of playwrights and directors through premieres and the Other Season development lab. Many projects developed through this program went on to acclaimed runs at Seattle Rep and around the country including Irene Sankoff and David Hein's *Come From Away*, Cheryl L. West's *Shout Sister Shout*, Erica Schmidt's *Mac Beth*, and Kate Hamill's *Pride and Prejudice*. Under his leadership, Seattle Rep was the only theater outside New York and London to present David Byrne's *Here Lies Love*. Most recently, Braden initiated 20x30: Reimagine the Anthropocene, to commission twenty new plays by the year 2030, and New Directions, a unique commissioning program designed to support generative work from directors.

Around the country, Braden has developed new work at Ojai, O'Neill, Denver Center, and Perseverance Theatre. He has been a guest artist at Stanford, Gonzaga, Seattle University, and the University of Idaho. He conceived and developed *Way Stations*, a series of interactive walking tours in Seattle for the Northwest New Works Festival at On the Boards and is the co-creator of *Gordon Hempton: Let it Happen*, an audio installation about the life and work of Emmy-Award winning sound ecologist Gordon Hempton. He is married to Cheyenne Casebier and the proud papa of Phoenix Faye Abraham.

Reporting Relationships

The Director of Advancement reports directly to the Executive Director and has the following management responsibilities:

- » **Associate Director of Advancement**
 - Special Events Coordinator
 - Advancement Coordinator
- » **Senior Manager of Major Gifts and Corporate Relations** (*vacant as of 4/22*)
 - Manager of Individual Giving

**Bold indicates DOA direct report*

Compensation + Benefits

The salary for this position is commensurate with experience and will range from approximately \$90,000-\$120,000. Writers Theatre offers a benefits package that includes:

- » **Health Insurance.** Health insurance coverage will begin on the first day of the month after sixty days on the job. The employee cost for individual coverage ranges between 25-35% of the cost of the monthly premium (currently \$101.01 to \$154.16 per month depending on the plan chosen), and WT pays the remaining cost of your individual premium for you. Coverage for a spouse, domestic partner, or children is available, and the Theatre will pay 50% of the cost of the monthly premium. Coverage is a choice between two PPO plans, or an HMO provided by UnitedHealthcare.
- » **Dental Insurance.** Dental Insurance coverage will begin on the first day of the month after sixty days on the job. WT will cover the cost of your individual premium for you. Coverage for a spouse or children is available, and the employees pay the difference in cost to add family member(s) to the plan. The employee portion of the monthly premium cost is deducted pre-tax from your paycheck. Coverage is a PPO plan provided by Delta Dental of Illinois.
- » **Long-Term Disability Insurance.** Long-Term disability coverage will begin on the first day of the month following your hire date. In the event you are unable to work due to injury or illness for longer than 90 days, this coverage will pay 60% of your salary subject to the terms of the policy. WT pays the full cost of your individual premium for you. Coverage is provided by Unum Insurance Co.
- » **403(b) Plan.** WT offers a tax-deferred 403(b) retirement savings options. Participation is voluntary. After one year of employment, WT matches employee contributions at 33%, up to 6% of their salary.
- » **AFLAC Insurance.** WT offers a range of supplemental insurance coverages including short-term disability, accident, and catastrophic illness coverages. Participation is voluntary; employees pay the full cost of premiums for elected coverages.
- » **Cafeteria Plan.** You may elect to participate in Medical and/or Dependent Care flexible spending accounts, which allow you to use pre-tax dollars to pay for qualifying dependent-care and medical expenses.
- » **Paid Time Off.** WT allows you to accrue up to 10 vacation days, five sick days, and five personal days per fiscal year, as well as 10 paid holidays.
- » **Direct Deposit.** You can opt to have paychecks directly deposited to a bank account.
- » **Complimentary and Discounted Tickets.** Employees are eligible for a complimentary pair of tickets to each subscription play subject to availability, as well as certain discounts on ticket purchases.

As a reflection of our firm's commitment to equity and equal pay for all, Cooper Coleman requires that salary ranges or salary starting points be published for every search we conduct. The practice of not posting salaries perpetuates the gender and racial wage gap and discriminates against women, people of color, and other historically excluded populations by causing individuals to negotiate from a disadvantaged starting point.

Location

This position is hybrid position located in Glencoe, IL, and requires the successful candidate to reside in or relocate to the Chicagoland area before their start date. WT's hybrid work model requires two to three days in the office each week, or as business requires.

Submission Instructions *(read carefully)*

[Cooper Coleman](#) is leading this search on behalf of Writers Theatre. To apply, please [visit this link](#) (www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches). Nominations of qualified candidates can be sent to:

Johnny Cooper
johnny@coopercoleman.com

Kindly use the position title as the subject line of your email. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

A cover letter is not required with your initial application but is welcomed to help us understand your fitness for and interest in this role during our initial evaluation. Candidates invited for interviews will be asked to provide a thoughtful letter of interest indicating their specific qualifications for the opportunity, desire to join Writers Theatre, and connection to its mission.

Cooper Coleman LLC is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates and will refer candidates without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, ability, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis.

EEO + Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Writers Theatre is an equal opportunity employer located in Glencoe, IL. We are committed to upholding the principles of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and anti-racism in recruitment of staff in all departments. To that end, for all employment opportunities, we actively encourage applications from persons of color, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, individuals with disabilities and all other identities and legally protected classes.

Writers Theatre's Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

At Writers Theatre, we stand together against racism, and for justice and equality. We are committed to listening and learning and are invested in the work critical to change, in order to ensure an equitable society for all, especially for those who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

We hold ourselves accountable. We are dedicated to a continuous in-depth, organization-wide assessment of our policies and ways of working that involves the staff, board, and community members. Together, we are working to improve existing policies and implement new practices that reaffirm that racism, harassment, and discrimination have no place at WT.

View Writers Theatre's complete statement on our commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion [here](#).

Background Checks + Credentials Verification

Before sending your resume for this position, please read it over for accuracy. Cooper Coleman verifies its candidates' employment and academic credentials at the time of offer, and our clients frequently conduct background checks before finalizing an offer.

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About Cooper Coleman

Cooper Coleman is a full-service recruiting and consulting firm partnering exclusively with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions to drive meaningful growth. We move organizations *forward* by placing the right leaders in the right roles at the right time, and we help to strengthen management and fundraising capacity to amplify their mission and impact.

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