



**TOM O'CONNOR**  
CONSULTING GROUP

**Pioneer Theatre Company**  
**Managing Director**

Position Profile

February 2024

# Managing Director

## Position Profile



## About the Opportunity

---

Pioneer Theatre Company (PTC) in Salt Lake City, Utah, seeks its next **Managing Director (MD)** to partner with **Artistic Director Karen Azenberg** in leading the city's premier theatre company and its team through this challenging era to ensure that PTC continues to make its significant contributions to the city and to the field.

The ideal candidate for **Managing Director** will bring expertise in the non-profit performing arts field, from strong financial acumen and strategic thinking to a human centric and ethical leadership ethos and a commitment to civic connection. This individual will be able to work in a fast-paced environment, prioritizing tasks and responding to the needs of others with critical thinking, tenacity, and resiliency.

PTC's next Managing Director will take their place in the local arts leadership with priorities that include:

- Forging an energized, complementary, and collaborative relationship with PTC Artistic Director Karen Azenberg.
- Attracting new sources of revenue, both through philanthropic fund development and untapped earned revenue options, with an overall goal of increasing PTC's budget in order to remain competitive within the industry.
- Bolstering an already supportive culture to keep and attract the best talent working in the professional theatre field.
- Ensuring that PTC is the leading voice in cultural discussions within the community and is always a significant player in Salt Lake City's greater cultural dialogue.
- Deepening and enriching the existing partnership with the University of Utah, creatively expanding new opportunities for synergy and cross-pollination.
- Embracing and maintaining PTC as a place where a diverse group of staff, board, and artists feel inspired to work in a safe and nurturing environment.

PTC and Salt Lake City have collectively come to a moment of thrilling forward momentum that makes the future rife with possibility for excitement and growth.

## About Pioneer Theatre Company

---

Pioneer Theatre Company (PTC) is Utah's premiere professional theatre company. The company has been the theatre in residence at The University of Utah since its origin in 1962. Steadily and with an understated profile that belies its extraordinary record of top-notch theatrical offerings, PTC has established itself as a significant regional player in the theatre world, brimming with ambition for further artistic excellence and achievement.

With robust support from the state and local community, PTC's theatre building, the Roy W. and Elizabeth E. Simmons Pioneer Memorial Theatre, was completed in October of 1962. Upon opening, PTC was dubbed the professional "State Theatre of Utah," and was acknowledged as the successor to the former Salt Lake Theatre, which had been founded in 1862 by the pioneers who settled in Utah. Dr. C. Lowell Lees served as PTC's first artistic director. As a member of the University of Utah faculty, he established the connective tissue between PTC and the local community—far beyond the University's academic circles. In 1964, Keith Engar became artistic director and established the first University Resident Theatre Association (URTA) contract with Actors' Equity Association. In the mid-1980s, Charles Morey assumed artistic leadership with a charge to fully professionalize the theatre, PTC soon achieved artistic and day-to-day management, which operates under an advisory board consisting of local business and community leaders which advises PTC, with ultimate decisions making by the University of Utah. PTC then furthered its reputation and standing by becoming a signatory to the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) contract with Actors' Equity and Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

Pioneer Theatre Company, which has a current annual budget of approximately \$5.5 million, produces a season of seven plays and musicals in its 932-seat home on the southwest edge of the University of Utah campus. The company's footprint at the University will expand in spring 2024, with the opening of the Meldrum Theatre at the Einar Nielsen Fieldhouse. The new 380-seat space, which is located a few hundred feet from the Simmons Memorial Theatre, will provide a comparatively intimate theatre going experience for select works—an expected two productions per season. The Meldrum Theatre provides an appropriate setting for PTC's commitment for producing new and lesser-known plays.

In 2010, PTC acquired, refurbished, and converted a former University dormitory into well-appointed apartments for artist housing. Now known as Meldrum House, this artist housing has been a draw in attracting top national theatre talent. It has also reduced and stabilized the "housing line-item cost" and logistical problems that plague many regional theatre companies. Because of its dedicated production and housing facilities, PTC provides a unique opportunity to add additional performances including, on occasion, a concert musical and new play readings.

Throughout its history, PTC has distinguished itself by producing at a consistently high level, offering Utah audiences Broadway caliber performances by the best national and regional talent. Theatre professionals around the nation have taken note of PTC's commitment to excellence and its high production values, including such landmark honors as being the first regional theatre company to be granted performance rights to *Les*

*Misérables* (playing to 82 capacity-filled performances in its initial 2007 run, and triumphing again in a 2012 revival), as well as important regional presentations of recent Broadway musicals *Bright Star* and *The Last Ship* (with creator and legendary music icon Sting supporting that effort and attending performances in Salt Lake City).

In 2022, PTC produced the Broadway-bound musical, *Shucked*. The world premiere was directed by three-time Tony Award winner Jack O'Brien and written by the Grammy and Tony Award-winning team of Robert Horn, Shane McAnally, and Brandy Clark. Opening in April 2023, *Shucked* went on to receive nine Tony Award nominations. This marks the first time (ever) that a Utah-based theatre served as an out-of-town tryout for a Broadway musical.

### **Leadership**

Karen Azenberg was named as Pioneer Theatre Company Artistic Director in 2012, the fourth person—and the first woman—to hold the position. Ms. Azenberg has deep roots in the national theatre community as the director and choreographer of over 80 musicals and plays. She has been the past president of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and is a voter for the annual Tony Awards. Ms. Azenberg's ambitious artistic vision has shifted PTC to a new level.

Chris Lino, PTC long-serving Managing Director, served the company from 1991 to 2019. One of the most successful administrative heads of a regional theatre in the past three decades, Mr. Lino helped to secure PTC's place as Utah's preeminent professional theatre company and was a guiding figure in a larger discussion about the region's burgeoning cultural scene. Under his leadership, PTC contributed to the establishment of the Zoo, Arts and Parks (ZAP) Program (ZAP), which allocates a portion of local sales tax dollars to a number of Salt Lake County's cultural organizations. ZAP has been renewed three times with overwhelming support from voters and the Salt Lake County Council. Mr. Lino was also responsible for a major expansion of the PTC theatre building, executive offices, and backstage facilities in 1996 and the aforementioned Meldrum House actor housing project.

Pioneer Theatre Company is advised by a 25-member Board of Trustees, comprised of leading figures in Salt Lake City's business, academic, philanthropic, and cultural communities. While PTC's relationship with the University of Utah has evolved over the years—being largely self-supporting due to its subscriptions, ZAP funds, and base of donors—the company has held its place as a significant part of the University's commitment to deep social and cultural leadership, civic engagement, and arts research.

### **Current Environment and The Future**

The next Managing Director will join an organization with dynamic artistic leadership, a rich and winning history, and a devoted season ticket holder base. At the same time, important opportunities and challenges exist that the next administrative leader of PTC will want to address.

While PTC continues as Salt Lake City's leading professional theatre company, it is not immune to the evolution of its market, particularly as the metropolitan area has significantly grown in population, cultural diversity, and disposable income. In recent years, a number of niche theatre groups have emerged, presenting new or smaller plays that enhance the local theatre scene and audiences. These companies provide valuable experience and opportunities for mostly local actors and production personnel, many of whom also occasionally work at PTC.

However, two new larger venues have expanded the mainstream theatrical entertainment choices for Salt Lake City's growing population, creating new challenges for PTC: The George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Theater and Hale Centre Theatre. The Eccles is a large 2,468 seat performing arts venue, mainly presenting national tours. Because of its massive size, The Eccles has increased the number of touring theatrical shows appearing in Salt Lake City and attracts early appearances of blockbusters like *Hamilton* and *The Book of Mormon*. In contrast, Hale Centre Theatre, now located in Salt Lake County's rapidly growing Southern suburbs is a large venue producing and presenting family-oriented theatrical presentations consisting primarily of musicals with longer runs and at a lower price point than PTC. Hale is a hybrid organization that is an outgrowth of a community theatre company that primarily hires local non-equity actors and production staff.

Like other markets, following the Global Pandemic, PTC has seen a changing cultural landscape in which consumers have become more insular and hesitant to seek experiences outside the home. Prior to the pandemic, PTC ticket sales were stable and supported PTC's operations, and the challenge of convincing audiences to return to the theatre, and to encourage younger generations to experience the thrill and engagement of live theatre, continues to equate to a fight for the long-term survival of the company.

Despite these challenges, there are expanding opportunities within the market. In recent years, the Salt Lake City metropolitan area has experienced tremendous population growth because of a growing job market. Numerous technology, biomedical, and financial companies have incubated in, or relocated to, the Salt Lake Valley because the area's major universities and colleges produce a highly trained workforce. These employers have also discovered that Salt Lake City attracts employees due to the high-quality lifestyle offered. This includes a robust arts and culture sector, as well as outdoor recreation.

As a result of this growing workforce and population, the local character of the city is becoming more diverse. Salt Lake City is the international headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which itself is a major supporter of the arts. As a changing community, Salt Lake City, the capital city located in the middle of the major urban market in the state of Utah, is becoming a highly progressive metropolitan area that fosters diverse arts, cultural, and political communities. By way of example, the area has, in recent years, elected a number of LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC State Legislators. In 2016, Salt Lake City elected its first openly gay mayor, Jackie Biskupski. This rapidly growing, highly educated, and diverse population is PTC's ideal future audience and donor base. As the personality and culture of Salt Lake City has evolved, PTC has served—and is poised to continue to serve—this market as an authentic catalyst for greater social and cultural engagement.

## Job Description

---

The Managing Director and the PTC Artistic Director Karen Azenberg will form a supportive, collaborative, and encouraging partnership. As a co-partner/leader in PTC's trajectory of increasing artistic achievement and notoriety, the managing director will report directly to the Associate Vice President for the Arts and work in close partnership with the PTC Board of Directors. Possessing a collective outlook on leading the developmental efforts of the organization, the managing director will clarify PTC's primary objectives and drive resource alignment and growth for continuing success. The Managing Director will ultimately oversee all operational functions in the areas of fundraising, audience development, and communication and Human Resources. Essential responsibilities include:

- Create and maintain a relationship of trust, encouragement, collaboration, and joyful exploration with PTC's artistic director.
- Continue PTC's strong alliance with the University of Utah community, exploring deeper engagement for a continuing and mutually beneficial relationship while maintaining PTC's historical artistic and managerial independence.
- Work to more deeply define PTC place as a local, regional, and national source of the highest quality professional theatrical experiences for audiences seeking a diverse palette of plays and musicals.
- Expand PTC's audience and donor base through programs that reach younger people (particularly those in the tech and biomedical sectors), suburban dwellers, and underrepresented communities.
- Celebrate PTC's mission and vision in new ways that continue to engage long-time supporters, while making room for new constituents.
- Lead fund development efforts from both a contributed and earned income perspective.
- With the assistance of the board, learn about the philanthropic and patron culture in Salt Lake City.
- Serve as an open resource to staff for ideas, deliberation, and any conflict resolution.
- Promote a culture of transparency, productivity, balance, creativity, and harmony.
- Check in regularly with the artistic director regarding organizational and artistic vision, mission, and update strategic plans as necessary.
- Fostering and continuing to develop the integrated, collaborative and evolving relationship between PTC and the University of Utah Department of Theatre.

### Qualifications

Ideally, the successful candidate for this role will possess these skills and experience:

- An authentic love of theatre and the ability to passionately convey that passion to a wide range of audiences.
- The savvy and desire to work within a University administrative setting, keenly understanding how to effectively make this currently mutually beneficial relationship as effective as possible.



- A demonstrated pattern of success in administrative leadership roles requiring a high level of political and managerial dexterity.
- An active and creative mind.
- Extensive experience and clear skill in creating, understanding and managing budgets and financial tracking models for each production and season.
- A transparent and open style of staff management and leadership.
- A commitment to creating an expanding culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Experience with—and excitement about—fundraising.
- Exceptional communication skills—both verbal and written—and taking satisfaction in serving as a major public ambassador for PTC’s work.
- Effective track record of working with boards of directors, volunteers, and other support groups.
- At minimum, a bachelor's degree and, preferably, a graduate degree in a relevant discipline.
- Familiarity with requirements of theatrical unions, with experience in negotiating agreements with the theatrical unions.

### Special Attributes and Qualities

The following personal attributes will also be considered important:

- High emotional intelligence and an ability to build relationships of trust.
- A love of people and the ability to engage those from a variety of backgrounds and experiences with an open heart and mind.
- A proactive attitude combined with an innate sense of strategy.
- Innovative problem-solving talents.
- Discipline, rigor, and an appreciation of the highest level of artistic excellence.

The Managing Director will constantly put “we” before “I” in their set of personal and professional values. Through organization and foresight, the managing director will anticipate problems and create well-rounded plans for PTC’s continuing reach and impact. The most successful candidate will enhance the vision and ambition of PTC’s artistic director while guiding the ship with a steady and measured hand.

### **A Note from Tom O’Connor Consulting Group:**

**Not sure you meet 100% of our qualifications?** Research shows that men apply for jobs when they fulfill an average of 60% of the criteria. Yet, women and other people who are systematically marginalized tend only to apply if they meet every requirement. **If you believe that you could excel in this role, we encourage you to apply.**

We are dedicated to considering a broad array of candidates, including those with diverse workplace experiences and backgrounds. So, whether you’re returning to work after a gap in employment, simply looking to transition, or taking the next step in your career path, we will be glad to have you on our radar.

Please use your cover letter to tell us about what you hope to bring to this role.

## Compensation

---

The salary for the new managing director will be competitive with the salaries of administrative leaders of other companies of comparable stature and size, within a range of \$135,000 to \$165,000. As an employee of the University of Utah, the managing director will receive the University's generous benefit package as part of the total compensation offering. The benefit package is a perk that is rare to administrators in the arts and culture world.

PTC anticipates making a decision by May of 2024, with the chosen candidate completing some transition work with PTC Interim Managing Director, Diane Parisi, in the spring of 2024, before assuming full position responsibilities by July of 2024.

## Application Instructions

---

The search for the Managing Director is being conducted in partnership with Pioneer Theatre Company by Tom O'Connor Consulting Group, a New York-based executive search and consulting firm specializing in the arts and culture industries. Cynthia Fuhrman is leading the search process, reporting to a search committee appointed by leadership at the University of Utah in consultation with the Pioneer Theatre Board.

To apply, please use your cover letter to tell us about what you hope to bring to this role, and how your background and experience responds to the desired skills and qualities.

Interested and qualified candidates should submit a résumé that includes three references, cover letter (no more than 1 ½ pages), and salary expectation electronically to the **online application**.

The priority application deadline for this search is **March 4, 2024**. Applications received by this date will be given priority consideration. While we will still accept and consider applications received after this date, we encourage you to apply as early as possible for the best chance at being considered for the position. Please note that meeting the priority deadline does not guarantee an interview. No phone calls, please.