



## FROM THE TOP

**Director of Development  
From the Top  
Boston, MA**

### THE SEARCH

From the Top (FTT), America's largest national platform dedicated to celebrating the stories, talents, and character of young classically-trained musicians, seeks an entrepreneurial and ambitious director of development to work with a new executive director and support her vision. This is an opportunity for a creative and energetic individual who is passionate about the performing arts and the development of young artists to play a transformational role in supporting and extending FTT's world-class programs.

Founded in Boston in 1995, From the Top originated as a variety-style radio show featuring live music from young classically-trained musicians, ages 8 to 18, and sharing their personal stories as artists and kids. More than 20 years later, FTT has grown into a nationally renowned performance, multimedia, and arts education organization that transforms the lives of hundreds of artists each year and pioneers new ways to unite communities around the promise of outstanding talent. Every year, nearly three million fans around the globe enjoy FTT's public radio broadcasts, online videos, live performances, and education programs. Since its inception, more than 3,000 musicians have been impacted by FTT's national media exposure, performance opportunities, and arts leadership education programming, and over 240 artists have received substantial support through its generous scholarship programs.

This is an exciting time at FTT. In March 2018, Gretchen Nielsen became the organization's inaugural executive director, taking over from FTT's co-founders who stepped down after 20 years. Ms. Nielsen is charged by the board to expand FTT's presence nationally; develop new media programs and outlets by harnessing new technologies; increasingly diversify and grow its audiences; and elevate the impact of the FTT's programs in the lives and careers of the artists it serves. The director of development will be a key partner for the executive director in articulating a new vision for FTT; increasing support from individuals, foundations, and corporations; and identifying and recruiting new board members. To this end, the director will travel nationally to cultivate and steward donors as well as oversee Boston-based staff. The successful candidate will relish the opportunity to be innovative and entrepreneurial in expanding the pool of donors and their commitment to FTT; possess the poise and personality to successfully engage funders, volunteers, staff, and young artists and their families; have a deep passion for the creative arts and the transformational power of education; and a keen eye for operational efficiencies and maximizing resources.

From the Top has retained Jack Gorman of the national executive search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to assist in this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## FROM THE TOP

From the Top was conceived in 1995 when Gerald Slavet and Jennifer Hurley-Wales dreamed of hosting a variety-style radio program showcasing talented young musicians. The first live performance was produced at New England Conservatory in 1997 with celebrated concert pianist Christopher O'Riley as host. Over time, a series of additional key relationships and pilot programs with Public Radio International (PRI), WGBH in Boston, a public media powerhouse, and the Public Radio Program Directors (PRPD) National Conference helped hone the concept. It would become the organization's signature product: a weekly, hour-long public radio program called *From the Top with Host Christopher O'Riley*, featuring performances by—and the stories of—some of the nation's most extraordinary classically-trained, pre-collegiate musicians. Within one year of the launch of its weekly radio broadcast in 2000, *From the Top* enjoyed the fastest growth of any public radio music program in history, doubling carriage from 100 stations to 200. A complete history of FTT is available at [www.fromthetop.org/about-us/history](http://www.fromthetop.org/about-us/history).

Today, From the Top is a unique blend of a performing arts organization, media company, and pioneer in arts leadership education. Its commitment to excellence and its nimble and imaginative staff has enabled FTT to be innovative, take risks, forge new partnerships, and be responsive to creative opportunity while maintaining the highest quality content. FTT is distinguished from other performing arts organizations due to the national platform it offers and the unique performance experience it provides.

Once accepted, an FTT performer is given the opportunity to showcase his or her talents outside of the pressure-driven competition environment while also receiving the tools and support to effectively engage, collaborate, or lead within the community as a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century musician. Without a doubt, the national exposure from the radio show has helped propel many FTT alums to careers in classical music and other genres of music. However, what creates a profound alumni devotion to the organization is the high standard of care for the musicians; the support and resources FTT provides for all of its performers before, during, and after production; and the access to a network unmatched by other music organizations.

## MEDIA PROGRAMS

### Radio Show and Live Performances

In 2006, National Public Radio (NPR) began national distribution of the radio show *From the Top*. The show would ultimately become the most popular weekly one-hour classical music program on public radio, standing as a testament to the power and contemporary relevance of classical music in the hands of America's youth. This further inspired the organization's push toward increasingly innovative and varied programming beyond the radio show.

In 18 seasons of production, *From the Top* has delighted both seasoned and new classical music fans. Each episode features five or six performances along with interviews, revealing the heart and soul behind the talent of these extraordinary young musicians. Musicians are chosen to be on the program via national auditions, both online and in-person. The organization

identifies artists through a broad network of music educators and others in the music business who introduce FTT to potential performers. FTT accepts applications from classically-trained musicians, ages 8-18, who have not graduated from high school. More than 700 young people apply to be on the program, and approximately 150–200 are selected each year.

The show is recorded before live audiences through an annual national tour. At each performance, local talent joins with musicians from all corners of the United States in an inspiring musical storytelling celebration. From the Top collaborates closely with concert and performing arts venues who choose to present recordings during their seasons. Current and past partners include the New England Conservatory, Carnegie Hall, the Aspen Music Festival, the Cincinnati Pops, the Chautauqua Institution, the Shubert and Ordway Theaters, and the Boston Pops. From the Top also self-presents two to three shows a year, usually in Boston.

Audiences for the radio show and live performances vary. Radio listening audiences are generally above the age of 55, with a high level of education and a strong interest in arts and culture. Live performance audiences will vary depending on where the show is being presented. In general, live audiences consist of an even mix ages, including elementary to high school students, their parents and grandparents, as well as traditional classical music audiences.

In addition to casting talented young musicians, the program often features guest artists and collaborations with professional orchestras. Past guest artists have included cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Joshua Bell, Time for Three, Black Violin, film and television composer Danny Elfman, soprano Dawn Upshaw, violinist Hillary Hahn, and even Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Orchestral collaborations include the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the Colorado Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and the L.A. Philharmonic. Recent youth orchestra collaborations include with Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestras of the USA and China, and the Interlochen Arts Academy.

FTT has also recorded internationally in 2012 and 2013, first at a radio episode in Bogota, Colombia, and then in China where it recorded episodes with the Great Wall Academy and the Central Conservatory.

A podcast of the radio show as well as bonus content are available on Spotify, I-Tunes, and at [NPR.org](http://NPR.org).

### Video and Television

*See the Music* is FTT's online music video series which brings young classically-trained musicians together with collaborators from multiple artistic genres and disciplines. Launched in 2015, this new medium has created an opportunity to explore different types of content, including classical covers, classical/pop mashups, humorous shorts, musician profiles, and behind-the-scenes clips. Distributed on YouTube and social media, *See the Music* videos are an innovative way to reach millions of new fans who are dramatically younger than FTT's radio audience—a critical move in this drastically shifting media landscape. Since *See the Music*'s launch, its videos have garnered more than 10 million views on Facebook and YouTube, and led to an increase of more than 300% in FTT's YouTube subscriber base. FTT's YouTube channel can be found here: [YouTube.com/fromthetop](http://YouTube.com/fromthetop).

FTT previously partnered with Carnegie Hall, Don Mischer Productions, WGBH, PBS, and Liberty Mutual Insurance to produce two seasons of the Emmy-nominated TV series *From the Top: Live from Carnegie Hall* in 2007 and 2008. Based on the *From the Top* radio show, the

television version was able to take viewers behind the scenes with rising young musicians and capture the excitement of their Carnegie Hall debuts.

## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Leadership Training

A fundamental part of FTT's mission is the belief that young artists have the power to create positive change in their communities. From the Top mentors and supports young musicians as they envision their future in the arts. Whether they see themselves as ambassadors for their instruments, teachers, arts advocates, or at the forefront of applying the latest technology to the performance experience, this programming inspires them to take their music beyond the concert hall and out into the world.

FTT's arts leadership work is an area of tremendous opportunity, and the new executive director, Gretchen Nielsen, brings valuable new perspective to the organization's programs. Over the next 9–12 months, Ms. Nielsen and her team will be focused on evaluating and modifying the leadership programs to position them as an even more central part of FTT's mission.

### Alumni

More than 3,000 strong, the FTT alumni network is engaged in and passionate about FTT's mission. Today, alums are playing in the best orchestras across the country, pursuing solo careers, teaching, studying astrophysics or medicine, working as public servants, and doing their best to make their communities better.

FTT's first-ever alumni arts leadership residency was piloted in Kentucky in 2015 and followed by a second iteration in Miami in 2016. In each case, alums spent a week working with local students exploring how music can create positive change in a local community. The Miami residency culminated with a public concert, *Sounds and Stories*, featuring more than 250 young musicians from five Miami area schools.

In 2017, FTT launched The Alumni Leadership Grant program, which offers grants of up to \$5,000 to FTT alumni to support projects that reflect concern for their civic responsibility as artists, expand their professional skills and capacity, and include a highly collaborative community outreach and engagement component, particularly with a community or a group in need of assistance. The Alumni Leadership Grant is funded by the Howard and Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation and the Karma for Cara Foundation.

### Scholarships

In 2005, From the Top began its partnership with the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (JKCF), one of the leading and most generous foundations in the nation providing scholarships to promising students who have financial need. The Jack Kent Cooke Young Artist Award of up to \$10,000 is awarded annually to approximately 20 exceptional pre-collegiate musicians (ages 8 to 18) to support and defray the cost of their musical education. This partnership not only transformed the support and programming of FTT in subsequent years, but also provided young artists the necessary resources to explore and hone their already tremendous talents and blossoming music careers. To date, From the Top and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation have awarded \$2.6 million in scholarships to more than 260 exceptional young musicians with financial needs.

More information about From the Top may be found at [www.fromthetop.org](http://www.fromthetop.org).

## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

### **Gretchen Nielsen, Executive Director**

In March 2018, Gretchen Nielsen became the first executive director of From the Top. Recruited following a national search, Ms. Nielsen was previously the vice president of education initiatives at the Los Angeles Philharmonic (LA Phil). In that role, she launched Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA) with LA Phil's Music & Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel, and ultimately designed and implemented an integrated set of education programs that reached more than 150,000 school children, teachers, families, young musicians, and concert attendees every year. In addition, she broadened YOLA's reach nationally by offering annual conferences for teachers and leaders; led the establishment of the first national youth orchestra comprised of students from El Sistema-influenced programs, culminating in a festival for young musicians aged 12–18 and a celebratory free community concert in Walt Disney Concert Hall in July 2017; and played a key role in the LA Phil's development of plans for the Frank Gehry-designed Judith and Thomas L. Beckmen YOLA Center @ Inglewood. Internationally, Ms. Nielsen developed education projects with the Barbican Centre in London, El Sistema in Venezuela, El Sistema Japan in Tokyo, and INBA in Mexico City.

Before her decade-long tenure at the LA Phil, Ms. Nielsen worked with orchestras nationwide and major California-based arts and culture institutions during her time as a consultant with Manhattan-based EmcArts.

### **Board of Directors**

FTT is governed by an 11-member board of directors, some of whom have been with the organization since the early years. They are a dedicated group who represent diverse communities (including alumni and parents of alumni) and areas of expertise. Ms. Nielsen reports to the board, which has the fiduciary responsibility to govern the financial health and overall well-being of From the Top. The board of directors has four meetings per year that include lively, open discussions, and each director serves a three-year term with no term limits. Over the past few years, as part of preparing for a new executive director, FTT's board of directors has started to evolve from a founder-led board to focus more on governance, management, and fundraising. All board members make an annual contribution to the organization, albeit at varying levels. Most board members reside in Boston and on the East Coast.

Additionally, FTT has a 12-member board of overseers, who are more geographically diverse than the directors, and many of whom also make annual financial contributions and serve on committees.

## CURRENT ORGANIZATION

As FTT responds to changes in arts, culture, media, and education, the 2018–2019 season will necessarily include the strategic examination of programming, positioning, and organizational structure. Several key parts of the From the Top business model will be need to be examined, including the tour structure, media channels, and the expansion or re-definition of arts leadership and community engagement programs.



## Staff

In spite of the fact that one-third of the staff is often on the road for the national tour, radio show, and other events, FTT is a tight-knit organization that collectively thrives on the fast-paced environment driven by deadlines and ever-changing production schedules. Operating in a culture similar to that of many performing arts organizations, the staff functions much like a large family: self-critical while being up-lifting, opportunistic and unconventional when required, and maintaining the mentality of “the show must go on.” FTT’s supportive culture allows team members to be nimble and responsive to each other and its organizational partners. As a result, the staff is well known in the industry for its excellence and professional standards in production and performance. Due to the travel schedules and the collaborative dynamic of the staff, there is often crossover in functions and many individuals work dual roles. At the heart of the staff and their success is the core belief in FTT’s commitment to young artists and producing programs of distinction, while providing resources and leadership education to support their futures.

## Finances and Development

An independent non-profit organization since 2003, FTT is funded through both earned and contributed revenue. In fiscal year 2018, FTT received \$3.35 million in contributions and earned \$551,225 in revenue from a variety of sources including NPR carriage fees and payments from host venues. Related to fundraising, 80% of the \$3.35 million in contributions was earmarked for 2017-2018 programs and 20% was designated for future-year programs. The majority of FTT’s funding comes from individuals (20.17%) and foundation partners (23.22%). Key funding partners in 2018 included the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, The Klarman Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, and The Volgenau Foundation. Other sources of support include FTT’s annual fundraising gala (7.47%); national, state, and local government funding (5.62%); corporate gifts (1.76%); in-kind gifts (6.13%); 2020 campaign funds (7.77%); and funds released from prior fiscal years (27.86%). In addition to 2018 revenue, FTT utilized approximately \$200,000 in operating reserve funds to meet its commitments.

From the Top is also in the midst of the 2020 Campaign, a special \$3 million fundraising effort to invest in three key areas that will propel the organization forward as it embraces change, adapts to a shifting media environment, and embarks on the next chapter of its history. The campaign priorities are: a thoughtful and strategic executive transition; the advancement of the organization’s footprint in Boston and nationwide; and long-term artistic and programmatic innovation. The Board of Directors is leading the campaign, with Chair Jeffrey Rayport and Vice Chair John Pattillo overseeing fundraising efforts.

In fiscal year 2018, FTT’s operating costs were \$3.56 million, of which 64.9% was for program expenses, 20.2% for development expenses, and 14.9% for management and administration expenses.

## DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

The director of development reports to the executive director, serves on her leadership team, and oversees a team of Boston-based staff. The director of development will partner with the executive director, colleagues, and key volunteers to define a vision for development that advances FTT’s mission, programs, and strategic goals and priorities. To this end, the director of development will be a lead partner in building FTT’s board; design and implement an innovative fundraising program that attracts new sources of funding from individuals and

institutions alike; increase major, principal, and planned giving opportunities; expand FTT's donor base nationally by targeting key regions and markets while navigating the relationships with NPR, local public radio stations, and presenters as it relates to the donor pipeline; thoughtfully steward existing donor relationships; and elevate the engagement and involvement of alumni, their parents, and friends in FTT.

**Following are the responsibilities and duties of this role:**

- Guide and support the executive director in her role as chief spokesperson and fundraiser, serving as an adviser and co-strategist in cultivating and soliciting transformative gifts; ensure that she is effectively staffed for fundraising activities and that her time is optimally utilized.
- Similarly, guide and support other FTT program staff, board members, and other volunteers in all advancement-related activities, ensuring their time and talents are utilized appropriately.
- Engage and encourage the board of directors in creating a culture of philanthropy and a willingness to engage in development; establish a development committee.
- With the executive director, recruit new board members who will diversify and professionalize the board, increase its national representation, and eagerly embrace both ambassadorial roles and philanthropic commitments.
- Identify ways to expand the role and commitment of the board of overseers, giving those volunteers clear opportunities to contribute to FTT in meaningful ways including and beyond philanthropy.
- Personally identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward prospects and donors at major and principal gift levels and explore options for planned giving; identify and cultivate new institutional donors, matching them to FTT programs and goals.
- Assess the fundraising potential of FTT and its various programs; identify compelling major funding opportunities that inspire and challenge the FTT community to engage in and commit to its future.
- Build a strategic and systematic development program that is reflective of industry best practices and consistent with FTT's mission and core values, and which balances short-term needs with long-term growth and goals while driving increases in philanthropic revenue year over year.
- Craft a sophisticated fundraising and engagement strategy, further deepening existing donor commitments to FTT while also working to broaden the organization's base of support; utilize clear and compelling communications to all audiences, which will reinforce its key priorities and strategic direction.
- Expand existing programs to maximize current use annual giving and increase alumni and parent participation and giving; leverage the annual fund as a pipeline for major and planned giving prospect.
- Provide comprehensive, timely and innovative stewardship; elevate the importance of stewarding all gifts and programs in ways that strengthen donor interest in, satisfaction with, and commitment to FTT.

- Leverage existing development staff and their institutional knowledge to systematically and strategically identify and acquire prospective individual and institutional donors, increase donor retention, and upgrade and renew existing donors.
- Ensure development staff have sufficient support and direction to maximize their personal and professional growth.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- A deep appreciation for the performing arts and arts education, and the ability to articulate the vision, mission, achievements and aspirations of FTT to a broad variety of constituents and audiences.
- The ability to create and lead an innovative development operation attuned to the diverse demographics of FTT's volunteers, donors, alumni, and parents as well as its multiple audiences (live, radio, online); the ability to articulate a vision for the future and to craft a fundraising program capable of building that future.
- Demonstrable achievements in management, frontline fundraising, and broad knowledge of all areas of fundraising including major and planned giving, corporate and foundation relations, annual giving, and government relations.
- Demonstrated ability and experience building on an existing development program, including individual and institutional philanthropy, in such a way that the increased philanthropic revenue is transformative.
- Proven ability to cultivate, solicit, and steward leadership gifts at the six- and seven-figure levels. The ability to inspire high net worth individuals and major foundations to financial leadership.
- Experience in board development and staffing, working to identify new volunteers and leveraging their time and talents in ways that increase their commitment to an organization.
- Experience building strong alumni and parent relations programs that excite interest in and deepen relationships with an institution.
- A collaborative, collegial approach; a demonstrated ability to work effectively across a complex, multidisciplinary organization and engage a broad range of individuals and constituencies.
- The credibility, maturity and sound judgment required to effectively engage and leverage the executive director, program staff, and volunteers in the cultivation, solicitation and stewardship of key prospects and donors.
- Excellent written, presentation and communication skills and the experience and inclination to be an effective, outgoing spokesperson for FTT.
- A keen eye for operational efficiency and optimal use of resources; the ability to plan, monitor, and tightly manage a budget. A high-level of comfort operating in a lean environment.
- Enthusiasm for working in an entrepreneurial and creative environment, and a demonstrated ability to work well with people at all levels, across a diverse range of educational and social backgrounds, and a strong commitment to teamwork.



- Strong personal integrity and work ethic coupled with an optimistic, warm and outgoing personality and a sense of humor; open-minded and welcoming of input and feedback.
- Willingness to travel routinely and extensively throughout the US.

## TO APPLY

This search is being led by Jack Gorman with Elizabeth Neustaedter, and Devon Benjamin. For more information, to make a nomination, or to apply for this role, please visit:

[www.imsearch.com/6664](http://www.imsearch.com/6664)

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