

national centre for circus arts

Annual Report 2021



Contents

3	Officers, Advisers And Trustees
4	Welcome from the Chair
7	Chief Executive's Foreword
10	About the National Centre for Circus Arts
11	Strategic Principles
13	Higher Education
15	Supporting the Creation of Great Circus
17	Youth Programmes
19	Our National Role
21	Financial Summary
23	Fundraising



Officers, Advisers and Trustees

COMPANY NUMBER:

2553293 (registered in
England & Wales)

CHARITY NUMBER:

1001839

REGISTERED OFFICE**& OPERATIONAL ADDRESS:**

Coronet Street, London N1 6HD

**KEY BUSINESS ADVISORS
AND CONTACTS**

The Conservatoire for Dance and
Drama, WeWork, 14-16 Great Chapel
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London, EC1Y 8YY

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London, EC1M 7AD

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London, EC1V 3NJ

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Bouverie Street, London, EC4Y 8DP

BOARD MEMBERS

Craig Calvert, Deputy Chair (*acting
chair until end of term 09/02/2021*)

Alison King, Chair (*joined the board
20/10/2020, chair from 09/02/2021*)

Tuikka Alaviitala (*until 05/08/2021*)

Cameron Brookhouse
(*from 20/10/2020*)

Kate Cavelle

David Chinn

Jane Crowther (*until 20/10/2020*)

Sue James

Elizabeth (Betsy) Lynch

Bill Morris

Tarun Nagpal

Thomas Nowacki

Darshak Shah

Paul Steggall

Lesley Strachan

William Underhill

Robert West

Rachael Williams (*from 20/10/2020*)

COMPANY SECRETARY

Froniga Lambert

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Kate White
Chief Executive

Dan Cowdrill
Commercial Director
(*from 05/07/2021*)

Froniga Lambert
Chief Operating Officer

Adrian Porter
Director of Higher Education
(*until 16/11/2020*)

Glen Stewart
Director of Training
(*until 16/11/2020*)
Director of Professional Development
(*from 16/11/2020*)

Welcome from the Chair



Alison King
Chair of the Board

I joined the National Centre for Circus Arts as Chair Elect in October of 2020 and took over the role of Chair in January 2021. It has certainly been an interesting time to take on this role in this organisation.

The National Centre returned to activity in the autumn of 2020 having spent the previous weeks during the summer preparing the building to offer a COVID-safe training and working space. Staff and students alike came back to Coronet Street with varying levels of apprehension and delight as the organisation followed the rest of the country in a tentative return to normality.

Sadly, this wasn't to last for long as we once again went into lockdown and were unable to reopen after our Christmas break, so 2021 started with students once again learning remotely until March. The organisation was of course better prepared this time, although the challenges of delivering circus arts online remained huge and needed the

creativity and adaptability of the amazing staff team to be at full stretch. As before, students proved themselves to be diligent and committed, enabling them all to succeed and to graduate: the graduation ceremony was able to happen in 'real life' and last year's cohort, who had their ceremony online, were invited to join the celebrations.

The London Youth Circus and Centre of Advanced Training students also had a year of mixed remote and in-person training delivered to ensure those young people did not only continue to look after their physical health, but also felt the community and mental health benefits that we know come from their engagement with circus.

The huge professional membership of the National Centre was supported with free access to training as soon as the space could open, and remote opportunities to network were scheduled while artists were unable to work. Freelancers were able to benefit from



our successful applications for Cultural Recovery Funding as the National Centre paid for some artists to participate in the Circus Change Up working groups, as well as creating a hugely popular week-long international masterclass festival in July 2021.

The dedication of the staff team, allowing the building to operate safely and keeping processes and management on track throughout, cannot be over-stated. From the site being managed to reduce footfall and crossover of groups as well as efficient remote access for all staff has meant that our community has stayed impressively well, safe, COVID-free and operational throughout. I personally want to thank all the staff for their resilience, hard work and dedication to the National Centre during these unprecedented challenging times.

Income from all regular sources has been decimated and the year would have been impossible to survive without the Cultural

Recovery Fund made available from the government. Our thanks go especially to Arts Council England for their unwavering commitment to us and the performing arts sector generally. We continued to furlough staff at various times but by early autumn of 2021, all staff were back at work and we have clear plans to stabilise and rebuild over the coming months and years.

The board of trustees has been hugely supportive and responsive to organisational needs during this difficult time, helping the senior team to respond to stakeholder demands and to plan when often it feels as though we are constantly firefighting. I would like to thank them for their ongoing commitment and expertise as well as their warm welcome as a new Chair.

Alison King

Chair of the Board



Chief Executive's Foreword



Kate White
CEO

Once again the National Centre for Circus Arts has faced an incredibly challenging year with determination and creative energy, never losing sight of our bigger plans for the future while responding to a rapidly changing external environment.

Embarking on a process of application for independent registration as a higher education provider has meant we have scrutinised our processes and are increasingly developing our confidence in how we can be sure we are delivering the very best circus arts education possible. We continue to work closely with our Conservatoire colleagues, both in central services and at the other member schools, to share knowledge and resources as we prepare for the future.

The Cultural Recovery Funds managed by Arts Council England allowed us to plan and prepare the building and our team for reopening and operating in a world that continues to learn how we are going to live and work with

COVID-19 as part of our lives. Our operations team transformed our building, putting in place safety measures and health and wellbeing protocols, as well as upgrades to facilities that will support our capacity to earn income from resuming commercial activities; while our programme teams learned at breakneck speed how to teach circus and support students at all levels, remotely. Our renewed focus on online activity and our presence via social media led us to develop a brand-new website that was launched in the summer of 2021, streamlining our offer and making sure information was accessible, current and relevant.

We were finally able to implement the recommendations of a significant organisational review that took place during late 2019 and early 2020 and the structure of the organisation is now streamlined into three clear directorates.

The Professional Development Directorate looks after all circus activity. At its heart is the Higher Education programme, supported either



side by youth programmes creating accessible pathways into training, teacher support and development, and the support we give professional circus artists post-graduation and throughout their careers.

Our Operations directorate looks after the building, our facilities and our technical services including circus rigging, finance, health and safety, governance and compliance.

Newly formed is the Commercial Directorate bringing together all activity that is designed to generate income that supports our charitable objectives. Encompassing fundraising, corporate workshops, events hires, recreational circus activity and the marketing and communication function, this new team is now almost complete and will play a critical role in our recovery as we aim to rebuild our activity and to create a stable and resilient organisation fit for the future we want.

We enter 2022 with enthusiasm and energy as we are tasked with creating our plans for

the next five years in response to the changes we have seen in the cultural landscape. This will shape our offer to the circus artists of the future and the support we give to professional artists both in London and those further afield.

We hope you will join us on this journey and will watch circus or participate in circus activity to ensure the creative pleasures and physical challenges of our incredible art form continue to thrive.

Kate White

CEO



About the National Centre for Circus Arts

GREAT CIRCUS EVERYWHERE

The National Centre supports circus as it matures and is ever more widely recognised as a dynamic, relevant and important part of the arts and cultural life of the UK. We deliver excellent circus arts training to support the development of the next generation of world-class circus artists.

We also support and collaborate with circus artists and companies throughout their careers to embed professional standards in teaching, facilities and the creation and presentation of circus to reach new audiences and participants with relevant, challenging and engaging work.

The National Centre's reach and relevance continues to grow through the development of revenue-generating activities that can support core education and artists' support activity. This enables us to build on our role as sector leader and continue to push the boundaries of the Circus Arts, while maintaining core 'business as usual' activities at our home in Hoxton.



Values



AMBITIOUS AND WILLING TO TAKE RISKS

We are ambitious for ourselves and our art form even in challenging times. With high professional standards and an expert community, we provide a safe space for artists, students and participants of all ages and stages in their own circus journeys, to take bigger physical and creative risks.



INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE

The anarchic nature of circus means it appeals to a broad range of people and we are committed to ensuring we meet the needs of our sector by being inclusive, open and accessible to everyone. We work hard to make sure all our staff, students, partners and stakeholders feel comfortable and able to work and create in the very best way possible.



ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE AND SUSTAINABLE

We are committed for the long term and strive to ensure our organisation is resilient and sustainable, operating a mixed economy model and demonstrating a truly entrepreneurial spirit to ensure our business can survive and thrive in our ever-changing world. In our home building in Hoxton we ensure we use our building efficiently, monitoring our energy usage to support our ambitions around the reduction of our carbon footprint year on year.



Higher Education

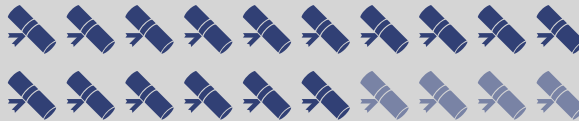
The National Centre's Higher Education programme is at the heart of our activity, and comprises a 2-year Foundation degree and a one-year BA 'top up' in Circus Arts, validated by the University of Kent.

 x **63**
Students



13 Students

graduated from the BA programme,
3 with first class honours and 10
upper second class degrees.



20 Students

were awarded a Foundation degree
after two years of study and **15 have
progressed onto the BA course**
commencing in September 2021.

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT

2020-21 was very far from a normal year, and our students pivoted between in-person and online teaching in response to lockdowns. Students and staff showed immense creativity and resilience, producing high-quality performances both online and live where circumstances allowed.

STUDENT PERFORMANCES



2,000 VIEWS

Foundation degree year one
Still Life — **ONLINE**

1,000 VIEWS

Foundation degree year two
Upwards — **ONLINE**

1,600 VIEWS

BA year
Breakout Room — **ONLINE**



OVER 280 AUDIENCE MEMBERS OVER 3 NIGHTS

BA year
Com-passū — **LIVE**



Supporting the Creation of Great Circus

The National Centre was able to reopen its training facilities and creation spaces for professional circus artists in September 2020. With valuable help from the Cultural Recovery Fund we were able to offer either highly subsidised or free training to our members.

MASTERCLASS FESTIVAL

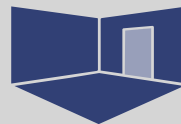
In July 2021 we held a week-long masterclass festival for the professional membership, thanks again to Cultural Recovery Funding. Designed and co-created with one of our professional members as curator, the programme had a mix of classroom-based, online and practical sessions led by expert practitioners from all over the world. The opportunity to get together, in person or online, was welcomed by the community and the whole week of events was incredibly successful.



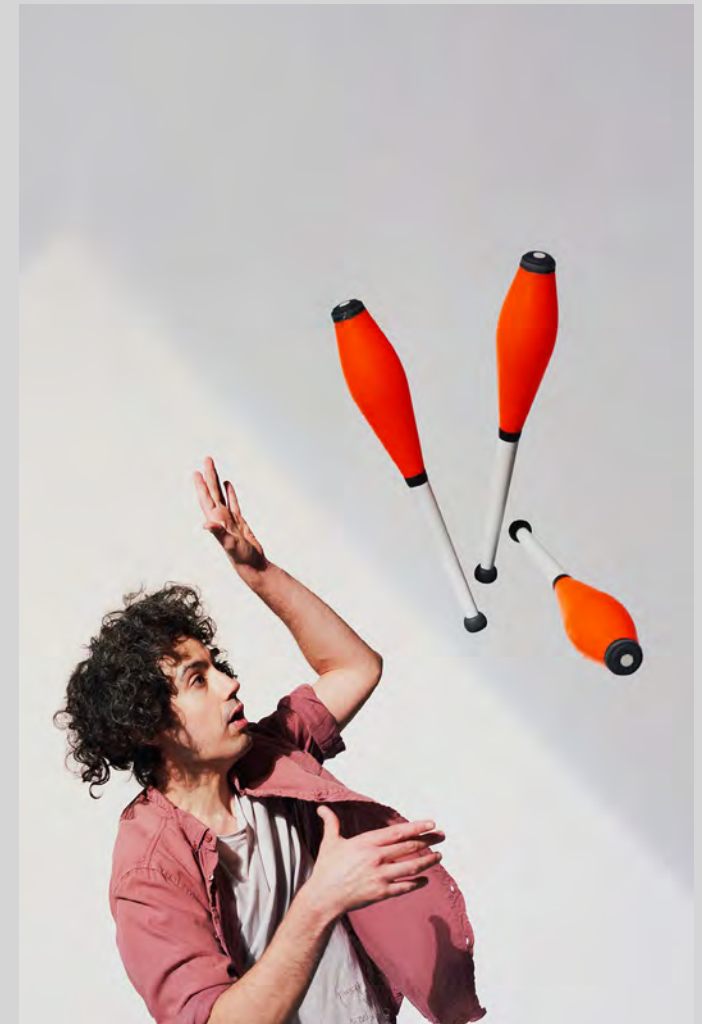
**130 Open
Training Members**



74 Artists
supported via studio hire
at a free or reduced rate



720 Hours of Studio Time
used by circus professionals
and companies to create
and rehearse works





Youth Programmes

The National Centre is home to the London Youth Circus, and also the circus strand of the Centre for Advanced Training (CAT). As with the Higher Education programme, these programmes moved between online and in-person delivery through the year. Unfortunately, due to wider restrictions, we were not able to run any of our recreational programme in person for young people during 2020-21, but did run online juggling classes which proved immensely popular.

CAT INTENSIVE WITH SIMPLE CYPHER

In June 2021 we ran a CAT intensive with Simple Cypher, a National Centre graduate company, and had all of our 28 CAT students in the space for the final intensive of the year. We finished off the year with a cabaret performed by our CAT students with 11 of them graduating from the scheme at the end of July 2021. Seven of those graduates have moved on to Performing Arts Degrees including those here at the National Centre and at Codarts in Amsterdam amongst others.



London Youth Circus Students



28 Centre for Advanced Training students,
including **15 from schools outside London**



16 young people took part in an online intensive
CAT programme in February



85 young people and **32 practitioners** took part
in an online National Youth Circus Event



Our National Role

The support that the National Centre offers the wider sector is crucial. How we then engage with other circus artists and organisations to ensure the challenges we are all facing are heard at the highest levels is a key priority. We are active within various groups and forums, and we want to develop more open information sharing and a willingness to collaborate in ways that have previously not been explored.

The launch of our refreshed website in July 2021 presents an opportunity for us to create a resource hub for the wider sector, where we can share and disseminate advice and best practice across a range of issues that affect both individual performers, circus companies and other circus schools across the country.

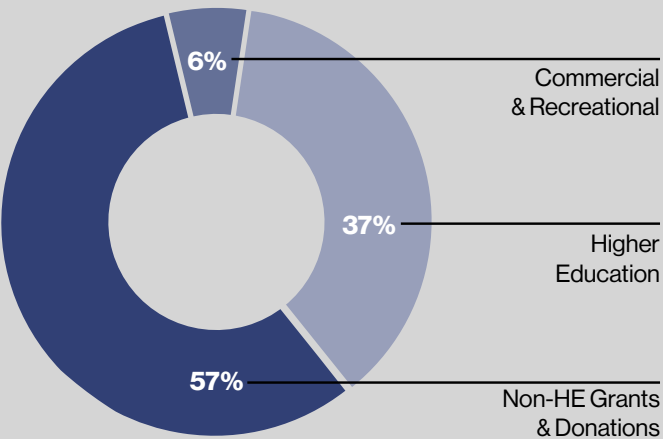
We are active in the Circus Change Up network, with staff members being present in a variety of working groups as well as supporting costs for some freelance circus artists to enable them to devote time and their own expertise to contributing to the debates and actions being developed.

National Centre for Circus Arts is a key UK representative at the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), where our Head of Degree Delivery is currently a board member.

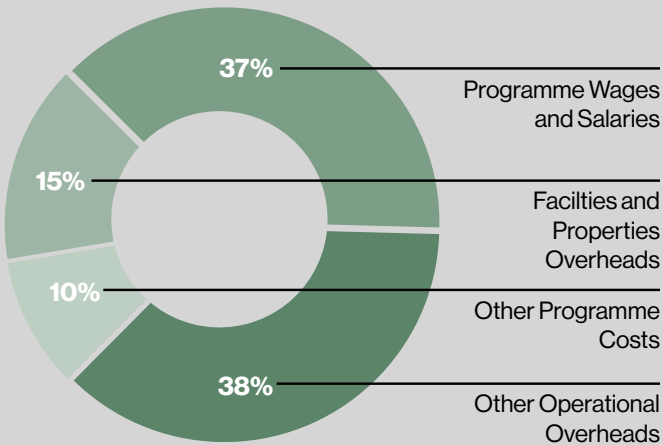




Financial Summary



Income: £2,787,208



Expenditure: £2,776,900

Our income mix was significantly reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, as we were not able run recreational classes or any commercial activity, which in a usual year accounts for around a third of our income.

However, we did receive extraordinary grants of £833k from the Arts Council and £270k from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme representing a total of just over £1.10m. Together with grants from the same sources in 2019-20, the National Centre has received total support over the two years of £1.53m which has been essential to our financial viability.

The following table illustrates the collapse in our recreational and commercial income and its replacement by the grants detailed above, leaving the overall income at a very similar level.

Total Unrestricted income remained high at 88% (2020: 92%) although the number and sources of donations and grants reduced during the year.

	2020-21	2019-20
Higher Education	37%	34%
Non-HE Grants & Donations	57%	35%
Commercial & Recreational	6%	31%
	100%	100%
Total Income	2.78m	£2.70m



Fundraising

Raising voluntary funds from trusts, foundations and individuals is a vital source of income for the National Centre, enabling us to fulfil our charitable objectives as effectively as possible. We are grateful for the support given by all our donors. We believe that fundraising should be an open, honest and respectful process and we aim to build and maintain solid partnerships with our supporters and donors, based on mutual understanding and shared values and goals.

THANKS

The National Centre would like to thank the following funds, organisations and individuals for their support in 2020/21:

Patrons **Aileen Getty**
Stephen Daldry

Support



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



an affiliate of the
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

The Leverhulme Trust

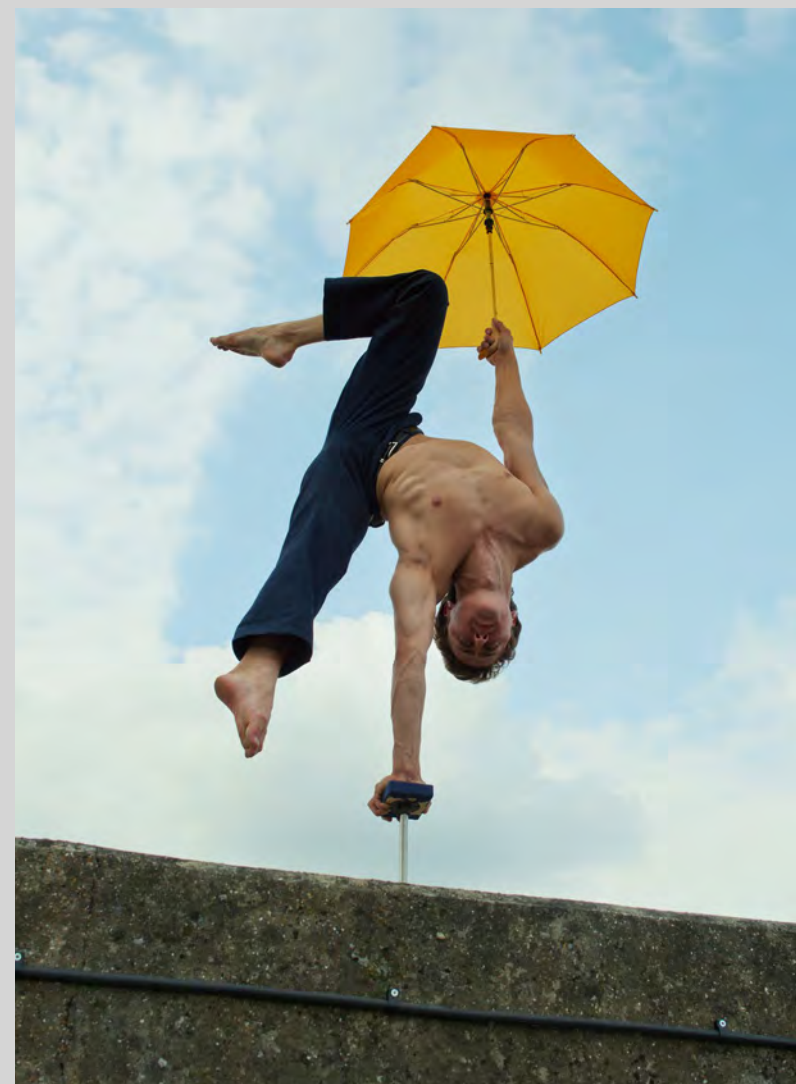


**JERWOOD
ARTS**



Additional support

**Coronavirus Job
Retention Scheme**







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