

**national centre
for circus arts**



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ABOUT US

The National Centre for Circus Arts is one of Europe's leading providers of circus training. Located in the heart of East London, in an area long known for creativity and new ideas, our aim is to immerse as many people as possible in the art of circus. Whether recreationally, or as part of our higher education programme, we are passionate about ensuring the highest standard of training whilst advocating for the art form so that circus is fully visible within the UK's rich cultural tapestry.

Based in a magnificent Victorian power station adjacent to Hoxton Square, we are at the heart of developing and supporting circus and its professionals throughout the UK.

Our activities include:

- 70 students on our BA (Hons) degree in Circus Arts.
- The London Youth Circus, a progressive training scheme for under 18s with 100 participants.
- Access and participation programmes focussed on providing opportunities to participate for those less able or for whom additional learning support is required.
- 450 registered professional members taking advantage of our Open Training scheme.
- A wide-reaching recreational circus programme catering for 400 adults and 200 young people every week.
- Workshops, learning programmes and away-days for the corporate market.



OUR MISSION

To steward the evolution of the circus arts by nurturing exciting new talent, forging new pathways of participation, fuelling its creation, and amplifying its cultural relevance.

We achieve this mission with the following aims:

Training - we aim to deliver the very best training in circus to ensure that graduates have the skills, insight, and technical ability to take their place in the sector and develop as professional artists.

Access – we aim to break down barriers by developing wide-reaching recreational programmes that aim to provide access for - and represent - as diverse a pool of participants as possible.

Support – we aim to support and collaborate with those creating circus, to facilitate the honing of their craft, nurture the development of new work, and build on the close community that is vital to its existence.

Advocacy - we aim to nurture the art form and advocate for circus so that it continues to be dynamic and innovative within the rich cultural offer of the arts in the UK.



THE POWER OF CIRCUS

Circus has a unique ability to straddle both physical activity, wellbeing and the performing arts and many of our participants relish the opportunity to explore both aspects.

Graduates of our higher education programme have gone on to work around the world with companies including Cirque du Soleil. We also work closely with some of the UK's most reputable venues and companies including the RSC, The Bridge Theatre, the Roundhouse and Jacksons Lane Theatre.

Ultimately, we have always recognised the power that the performing arts has in holding a mirror up to society and teaching us about the world around us, and circus is especially well-placed to do this.

OUR MODEL

Maintaining adequate funding for the National Centre and the arts more generally has been a challenge in the last five years. Previously an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation for 20 years, this came to an end in 2023 due to a redistribution of funds outside of London. Student fees remain almost frozen since 2017 and other funds for higher education have either ceased or remained at a standstill.

We advocate every day for a return or replacement of these funds but in the meantime, we must find other means to support our work. This has meant developing a model that is resilient and sustainable, and we focus closely on a commercial approach that exists to support our charitable work. This covers our recreational programme, corporate workshops, developing the use of our building as an events space, and strengthening our fundraising pipeline through individual support and with trusts and foundations.





OUR GOVERNANCE

The Trustee Board is the governing body responsible for matters including the finance, compliance, property and staffing of the institution. It is specifically required to determine the educational character and mission of the institution and to set its general strategic direction. The Trustee Board has access to several independent advisors.

Although the Board meets quarterly, much of the detailed work is delegated to sub committees, including those for Remuneration and Nomination, Finance and Audit and the chair of each committee is selected from the Trustees.

In addition are the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Academic Board. These are chaired by the Chief Executive who is the school Principal and also includes members of staff and nominated student members.



WHO WE ARE



ALISON KING
Chair

Alison is a multi-award-winning Theatre and film Producer. Alison is Chief Executive of Turtle Key Arts, a performance arts company that devises and produces original work with a particular emphasis on making art available to all. It has had a huge impact nationally and internationally during the past 35 years.

Alison has produced many great artists and companies over the years, currently working with Ockham's Razor, Amici

Dance Theatre, AIK Productions, Open Sky Productions, Sadiq Ali, all of which have created award winning shows that tour nationally and internationally.

Turtle Key Arts have been at the forefront of developing and delivering outreach and participation projects in the fields of dementia, autism, HIV, dyslexia and inclusive arts.

Alison has been the Chair of The National Centre of Circus Arts since 2021 and was recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and the University of East Anglia for her contribution to Theatre.



DAN COWDRILL
CEO and Principal

Dan has over 25 years of experience working with a range of arts, heritage and not-for-profit organisations at a senior level. His areas of expertise have covered programming, income generation, fundraising, external relations, finance, and operational delivery.

After a number of years at the British Museum as part of their fundraising efforts he spent five years as a consultant, working with a range of organisations in need of new commercial and fundraising strategies.

He joined the National Centre in 2021 as Commercial Director and then took on the role of CEO in August 2024. Dan's role focuses on three key areas: ensuring the organisation can be as accessible as possible to those wanting to participate in circus, can thrive as a small, specialist higher education provider, and advocating for the art form and its performers wherever he can.



THE ROLE

- To proactively support the ongoing development of the National Centre for Circus Arts whilst ensuring that the organisation meets its charitable objectives.
- Ensure that the National Centre for Circus Arts and its policies comply with charity law and company law.
- Ensure the financial stability of the organisation, agreeing annual budgets and monitoring financial performance.
- Be an active member of the National Centre for Circus Arts sub-committees as appropriate, reading papers in advance and contributing to discussions.

- Contribute specific skills, interests and contacts and to support the organisation in fundraising activities.
- Gain an understanding of the Articles of Association and the Charity Commission guidelines.
- Review and ratify the policies and procedures of the organisation on an annual basis.
- Represent the National Centre for Circus Arts externally and act as an ambassador and advocate.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We want our Board to be representative of our local community and so would welcome approaches from people with a passion for the performing arts, who live locally or have a connection with the National Centre. However, we are also conscious of our national remit and so would also welcome applications from those with an interest in the performing arts who are based outside of London.

We very much encourage applications from under-represented groups, particularly people from Global Majority backgrounds but also a broad age-range and people living with disabilities.

It is also not necessary to have had previous experience of sitting as a trustee and there is no educational qualification requirement or expectation of having reached a certain stage in your career.

During this recruitment, we are particularly looking for trustees with skills and experience in the following areas:

- Higher Education
- The Performing Arts
- Fundraising (individuals, trusts and foundations, and corporate)
- Audit and Compliance
- Estates and Property
- Law



WHAT YOU WILL BRING

- A willingness to devote time and expertise, informally spending time with senior members of staff and attending various events and performances at the National Centre (one per term).
- An ability to think creatively, provide scrutiny, and take part in decision making.
- A willingness to understand Charity and Company law and understand the duties of trusteeship.
- An interest in the arts and a willingness to advocate for the development of circus and the National Centre.
- A willingness to raise funds for the National Centre, either personally or through personal networks.
- A commitment to adhere to the Nolan Principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, leadership, openness, honesty and accountability.
- A willingness to commit to an average of two days each month.

If you feel that your working hours, employment status, caring responsibilities, socio-economic status, cultural background or access needs might be a barrier, we would encourage you to still get in touch so that we can talk about any concerns that you might have.



HOW TO APPLY

Application is by CV and a supporting statement outlining the reasons for your interest in the post and explaining why you believe yourself to be suitable.

To arrange an informal conversation with the CEO, Dan Cowdrill, or to apply, please contact to recruitment@nationalcircus.org.uk.

IMAGE CREDITS

Tim Booth

1,3,4,5,7,12,13

Mark Morreau

2,6

Alice Underwood

9,16

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