BA (Hons) in Circus Arts – Course Information

The BA (Hons) in Circus Arts aims to develop a broad range of the skills required as a professional circus artist, with a strong focus on artistic creativity and collaboration, as well as the development of reflective and analytical skills. A specialisation process enables each student to find a circus discipline which will be suited to them and to develop a technical and creative vocabulary in that discipline.

The training is intensive; you are expected to commit between 30-35 hours a week to your learning with a mix of taught sessions and scheduled independent learning. Each year is up to 32-34 weeks in length in order to sustain physical progression. Class sizes vary depending on the subject being taught. As well as physical skill development there is a strong focus on artistic exploration and creativity, contextual studies and preparing for the professional industry.

The course is divided into modules for assessment purposes, details of which can be found by clicking on the course content links below. The course will focus on continuous assessment of each student's individual progress, as well as performance related assessment both as an individual and as part of an ensemble. Students' analytical and critical skills are also assessed through research presentations, essays and other assignment projects. There are no formal timed written examinations.

The degree is delivered at the National Centre for Circus Arts and is awarded by the University of Kent. Students must complete and pass all modules in all years of the course in order to obtain the qualification.

Course Review

As part of our Quality Assurance Processes this course undergoes a periodic review. The next review is scheduled during the 26/27 Academic Year and any developments or changes to the course will be implemented in the 27/28 Academic year. We will inform all applicants about changes to the course when applicable.

Course Fees

Whether an applicant is classed as having 'Home fee' or 'Overseas fee' status will be governed by the UK Government's rules on residence.

Students classed as 'Home Fee' status: £9790*

Students classed as 'Overseas Fee' status: £18,500*

*These fees may be subject to change before your time on the course starts and for subsequent years of study. Any changes will be in line with inflation and/or government policy on higher education tuition fees. This will be clearly communicated to applicants when they are offered a place, if not before. Please also see the Fees Policy for more information.

Additional Costs

In addition to your tuition fees the following costs are applicable during your time on the course:

- Locker Key: £5 (one off payment to be reimbursed on return of the key)
- Specialist clothing: £50-£150 yearly and discipline specific
- Enrichment: £30 per year to attend three external circus performances (based on access to discounted tickets arranged by the National Centre)
- 50% contribution to end-of-course individual photoshoot: £120-£250
- Stationary and reading: £50 per year
- Devised performances (Costumes/props): specific to the type of performance created

Equipment Costs

The specialist equipment used in some circus specialisms can be expensive, but it is normally possible for the National Centre to supply you with access to the equipment you will need for your first year of the course. There are some exceptions, notably any apparatus which has to be custom made or made to fit the student's size. The cost for most of the common equipment can be seen below and the National Centre has a loan scheme to assist you in the purchase of this, provided it is essential for your circus discipline.

- Cyr wheel: £400-£800
- Single point trapeze + hardware: £400
- Regular weighted trapeze (with hardware): £265
- Rope: £285
- Tissue (with hardware): £250
- Handstand canes: £850
- Aerial hoop + strop and hardware: £250
- Fly pole (regular and with ball end and base): £1600
- Rosin: £10 for the year (discipline specific)
- Chalk balls: £20 for the year (discipline specific)
- Transportation and import duties for some equipment: £20-£100 (discipline specific)

Entry Requirements

- Applicants must be 18 or over on entry.
- The applicants will be able to demonstrate their intent to pursue professional employment in circus arts.
- Applicants must fulfil both parts of the admissions process by submitting an application form, and then attending an in-person audition day. Alternatively, they may submit a video audition.
- Any candidate applying for direct entry onto the 2nd year of the BA (hons) course should hold a 1-year Certificate or Foundation Degree (or equivalent) from a recognised FEDEC member institution. (Full member of FEDEC.) If you do not hold an equivalent qualification from a recognised FEDEC school but believe you have enough prior experience in Circus Arts, we may be able to consider you for RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning). Please contact admissions@nationalcircus.org.uk for more information.
- Direct entry applicants will be interviewed at audition and will be expected to provide a performance CV and their transcript to date.

English Language Requirements

Applicants will be required to demonstrate a proficiency in both written and verbal English language which would normally be GCSE English or equivalent International English Language Testing System. Overseas students may be required to take a Secure English Language Test (SELT) and achieve a **LEVEL B2** prior to entry in order to meet VISA requirements.

Locations

The National Centre is an organisation that is situated in Old Street in Central London. As well as delivering our Higher Education Courses, the building is used at various times by professionals who are members of 'Open Training', as well as children and adults who attend our many classes and courses. The building is also a popular events venue and available to hire. Some income that is generated from venue hire supports the delivery of our Higher Education courses. Whilst the majority of modules are delivered onsite in the building, there may be a need to relocate some modules to external venues during event hires and sometimes Higher Education production periods. These will always be London based venues and we will always endeavour to make them as close to the National Centre building as possible. You will be informed as soon as possible by the Higher Education Team about where your classes will take place if not at the NCCA and may be financially supported in traveling to those venues.

BA (Hons) in Circus Arts - Year 1 Course Content

Overview

During the first year of the BA (Hons) in Circus Arts students can expect to spend an important amount of their autumn term being inducted into the workings of the National Centre for Circus Arts, preparing for their time as a student here and getting to know their year group. Students will gradually be inducted into the use of spaces and equipment, and students will access these resources when we are sure that they are safe and secure in their use.

Throughout the year they will undertake intensive physical classes in a range of circus-related activities, as well as sessions in performance, movement, and contextual studies which allow them to gain an understanding of circus in a wider performance context.

All students undergo a process to determine their circus discipline specialisation. This is a collaborative process between the student and staff, leading to a decision about which circus discipline is suited both physically and creatively to that person. Our goal is to help the young circus performer to establish the foundation for a long and fruitful career. We aim for all students in this first year to have completed this process by the end of the spring term. In the final term we create a timetable that prepares students for continued development for the rest of the course.

The year is comprised of 6 core modules:

NCA101 Circus Discipline

This module focuses on essential aspects of your training. It will be the core physical activity of your first year, moving from general circus skills through to the development of the basic and fundamental technical skills appropriate for your future development in your chosen specialist discipline. Students are assessed on their technical progress and understanding, as well as the early stages of developing their professional practice. The module also introduces students to anatomy and physiology.

NCA102 The Ensemble

This module introduces students to the specific creative and technical demands of creating an ensemble performance. Students are assessed on their engagement with the devising and rehearsal process.

NCA103 Movement

This module aims to develop foundational elements of physical performance. Sessions will encompass a range of techniques and explore approaches to improvisation, and students will be assessed on the quality of their movement work, as well as a reflective essay.

NCA104 Theatre

This module allows students to engage with the essential conventions and techniques involved in different forms of performance. Sessions will involve continuous exercises and presentations, and students will be assessed on the quality of their work in these sessions.

NCA105 Circus through the Performative Lens

This module explores the theoretical and practical application of historically significant performance practices to contemporary circus. Students are assessed through performance work and an essay submission.

NCA106 Circus from the Technical Perspective

This Module focuses on safety specific to circus disciplines and performances. In this Module, students will learn the basic skills and tools required to stay safe in any circus/performance environment.

BA (Hons) in Circus Arts - Year 2 Course Content

Overview

The second year of the course is devoted to the development of a student's technical abilities in their circus discipline and other technical skills as well as increasing their understanding of creating, devising and performance contexts. Students will have a tailor-made timetable that is specifically designed to support them in the development of their circus discipline, as well as scheduled independent learning sessions to allow students to work towards becoming an autonomous learner.

A typical week during year two will include classes in your specific discipline, other physical supplementary classes, acrobatics, performance, movement and contextual studies, as well as time for research and independent practice.

Year 2 is comprised of 6 core modules

NCA201 Circus Discipline 2

The module will be delivered as a combination of tutor led sessions/workshops and task driven independent learning. Some tutor led sessions will be specifically focused on the circus discipline itself, whilst other scheduled sessions will cover practices designed to complement discipline training – (e.g. acrobatics, handstands, Pilates). Scheduled independent and peer led learning sessions are a central element of this module, allowing students the space to bring learning from across the course into their practice, and to self-select areas of their training they wish to develop.

A key aim of this module is for students to learn to take responsibility for their own training and learning, to develop their ability to analyse and understand their own physical, technical and artistic skills through reflection and evaluation of their progress. Students will be expected to document their learning, as well as ongoing verbal feedback from their tutors, in order to track and monitor their objectives.

NCA202 Circus Ensemble 2

This second-year production/performance module is designed to further develop the student's understanding of the demands of the devising and rehearsal process, building on the experience of

the first-year module 'Circus Ensemble 1'. Students will be expected to demonstrate a higher level of responsibility and initiative, increasing their understanding of the role of the performer in the collaborative process. The module takes place towards the spring or summer term *(space dependant),* providing the opportunity for students to apply the skills they have acquired over the duration of the Degree course in a production context and public performance.

NCA203 Movement 2

This module addresses both movement technique and composition of material. Work in term 1 intensifies the technique work introduced in previous movement classes whilst also allowing students to generate original compositions. Sessions emphasising technique will focus on dynamism, somatic practices, complexity and detail. Composition classes will introduce students to choreographic principals and employ a variety of themes to explore the use of space, structure, and metaphor in creating effective performance material.

Work in term 2 advances the technique work explored in term 1 and places increased emphasis on the complexity and length of phrases, as well as heightened demands on clarity of movement and expression. Students will be expected to learn at an increased pace and adapt kinaesthetic information to create original material. Composition classes will include viewing and analysing performances to allow students to apply principles derived from outside sources to their own creative practice and in a range of artistic contexts.

NCA204 Theatre 2

This module investigates methods of creating work for performance. The focus of the first term is action and reaction – advancing students' ability to convey emotional honesty and intimacy on stage, drawing from tools developed in realistic and naturalistic modes of performance. By the end of the module students will be familiar with concepts such as psycho-physical awareness, public solitude, and working with objectives. There may also be some introduction to text work.

The focus of the second term is devising, exploring different approaches to generating performance material through exercises and rehearsals. Classes will examine creating from stimuli, and students will engage with a range of devising techniques. Basic dramaturgical methods for refining material at different stages of a creation process will also be explored. When possible, this element of the module will be delivered by a visiting practitioner or company who will introduce the students to their distinct approach.

NCA205 Preparing for the Performance Industry

This module provides students with a comprehensive introduction to the field of producing and production management within the circus and performing arts industry. Students will gain insights into the responsibilities of working professionals, exploring show management, financial aspects such as funding applications, marketing strategies, and profile building. The module is designed to prepare students for entry into the profession, with a focus on lectures and face-to-face discussions led by industry professionals. Emphasis will be placed on production processes, marketing strategies, understanding taxes, introductions to Equity and Health and Safety considerations for site-specific performances. Students will learn how to create, and be assessed on, promotional packs and digital profiles as well as presentation pitches.

NCA206 The Devising Process

In this module students will apply all of their learning from across the course – physical training, performance skills and theoretical work – to the creation of a piece of work for presentation. They will

devise, rehearse and perform a devised piece using their circus discipline. Students may create a piece alone, or may collaborate with another student (or students) in their year group. The module includes a series of presentations as part of the process leading up to the performance of the piece – in early presentations students should demonstrate and discuss a rough outline of their idea(s), progressing to a more developed stage of work and with more research and preparation re music, costume etc. The final presentation will be a fully completed and finished piece of work, ready for production rehearsals. Assessors and teachers will provide feedback to students following each presentation.

The work should be the student's own creation, but they are encouraged to seek advice and feedback wherever possible. There will be no scheduled taught sessions for the creation and rehearsal of the piece other than presentations, technical rehearsals (this does not include lighting) and performances – the student must manage this in their own time – but students are encouraged to utilise the time they have scheduled for module NCA201 Circus Discipline 2 to rehearse with their discipline teachers.

The module will conclude with in-house (family and friends) assessed performances of the final piece.

Students will also be expected to submit an assignment in the form of a project proposal (1000 words) during the development of the piece, and a reflection on the process and performance (1000 words) following the final performance.

BA (Hons) in Circus Arts - Year 3 Content

Overview

The emphasis of the 3rd year of the course is to consolidate the technical level of each student's specific circus discipline, continue to develop their personal artistic approach, advance their analytical and reflective skills and build upon their experience of performance contexts. A typical week includes classes in and to support their specific circus discipline, sessions in direction and movement, contextual studies, time for research and academic study, and a higher expected level of autonomy and independent practice than the first 2 years of the degree.

Year 3 is comprised of 7 core modules:

NCA301 Circus Discipline 3

In this module students will build on their skill acquisition in their circus discipline developed during the previous 2 years of the Degree in Circus Arts with the aim to progress their physical, technical and artistic development as a circus artist in line with industry expectations.

The module will be delivered as a combination of tutor led discipline focused sessions/workshops and task driven independent learning. Students will also be able to select to attend additional sessions in order to complement their discipline training and assist them in achieving their personal objectives (e.g. acrobatics, handstands, Pilates). Scheduled independent and peer led learning sessions are a central element of this module, allowing students the space to bring learning from across the course and previous learning from the Degree into their practice, and to self-select areas of their training they wish to develop.

Students will manage and direct their own training, applying the skills of analysis and reflection gained during their prior learning to their learning. Students will be expected to document their learning as part of their professional practice, as well as ongoing verbal feedback from their tutors, in order to track and monitor their objectives.

Alongside progression with technical skills in their discipline, students will be expected to demonstrate a level of professionalism in their practice in line with industry expectations of circus artists.

NCA302 The Circus Ensemble 3

In this module students will undertake a role in an ensemble performance, building on learning from previous ensemble modules undertaken earlier in their degree. The year group will be split into three smaller ensembles and experience the development of a company. They will explore the technical, creative, marketing and budgeting elements of company formation. Each group will devise, rehearse and perform an original piece of work. Students will be guided and supported National Centre staff and a creative producer.

NCA303 Movement 3

This module advances students' ability to apply principles of choreography and composition to the creation of new work. Students will devise and perform original movement pieces, with particular attention to space and architecture, imagery, performer-audience relationships, and conceptual coherence.

NCA304 Theatre 3

This module draws together learning from academic and performance classes to introduce students to the practice of directing. Areas of study include the role of the director, performance as semiotics, critical viewing, interpretation and adaptation, rehearsal techniques, management, and collaboration. Students will each have the opportunity to direct a short piece, and to perform in one another's work.

NCA305 Contemporary Circus in the 21st Century

This module allows students to analyse and contextualise developments in contemporary circus. Through a series of external practitioner lectures and student-led theoretical presentations on specific companies, the module will explore current practices, engage students in critical viewing, examine questions of genre, and consider the ways in which the work studied responds to wider social, political and artistic trends. Students will also produce an original piece of research in the form of a practitioner interview and reflective essay.

NCA306 Facilitating Workshops and the Practice of Circus Teaching

This module is designed to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate circus workshops. Emphasising a hands-on approach, students will explore various aspects of circus teaching, including writing comprehensive lesson plans, reflective practices, adapting to diverse learners, navigating safeguarding policies, conducting observations of teaching practice, and ultimately leading practical teaching sessions. The Module aims to provide a holistic understanding of the art and science of teaching fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. By the end of the module, students will be well-prepared to facilitate engaging and safe circus workshops, armed with a toolkit of effective teaching strategies and a heightened awareness of the diverse needs of learners in this dynamic and unique educational setting.

NCA307 The Devised Performance

In this module students will build on their previous experience of devising a piece for performance in the second year of the Degree in order to create a piece for public performance to professional standard. Students will be expected to apply all of their learning from across the Degree course to the process of creation from initial idea to performance.

They will devise, rehearse and perform a devised piece using their circus discipline in a performance context. Students may create a piece alone, or may collaborate with another student (or students) in

their year group. The module includes a series of presentations, all assessed as part of the process leading up to the performance of the piece, demonstrating progressive stages of a work in progress and culminating in a final presentation, the performance of a finished piece of work ready for production rehearsals. Assessors and teachers will provide feedback to students following each presentation.

Students are expected to take the lead in all elements of the process, including the direction of their discipline training (module NCA301 Circus Discipline 3) in the run up to performance. There will be no scheduled taught sessions for the creation and rehearsal of the piece other than presentations, technical rehearsals and performances – the student must manage this in their own time. Students will need to utilise the time they have scheduled for module NCA301 Circus Discipline 3 in order to rehearse with their discipline teachers, and to initiate opportunities to gain feedback from other members of staff / the production team as they feel is appropriate.

The module will conclude with a run of public performances, one of which will be assessed. Students will be expected to submit a risk assessment related to their piece/performance to demonstrate a professional level of understanding regarding health and safety protocols.