

# acta

*'acta community theatre is a national treasure' Baring Foundation*

**acta is seeking a Director to join and lead a highly-regarded company respected for innovative work and a successful track record in community theatre.**

## **1 acta community theatre – an introduction**

acta was founded in 1985, and occupies a unique position in its field, respected for its commitment to personal and community development through participatory community theatre and arts. The company operates an extensive programme from a well-resourced building in the heart of South Bristol, and has developed a national and international reputation for instigating and coordinating significant partnerships, programmes and events.

*(A recent documentary on acta can be heard here -*  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000bnb1>

The company engages marginalised communities and vulnerable people in making theatre, using a collaborative creative process through which they are able to tell their own stories, use their imaginations, and express their lives in the creation and performance of original, relevant and compelling theatre.

*'Powerful and hard-hitting; everyone should see this show' audience member, Drowning in Debt, March 2020*

Through this process, individuals and communities gain social benefit; improving confidence, emotional well-being, new friendships and understanding. acta has pioneered and refined this approach over 35 years, and leads a series of initiatives aimed at sharing learning.

acta has a successful track record of securing funding from diverse sources, currently; ACE NPO, Bristol City Council, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, BBC Children in Need, DCMS/Big Lottery, Creative Europe, local and national charities.

Further resources available at [www.acta-bristol.com](http://www.acta-bristol.com)

## **2 Director Job Description**

This appointment is a new post and a key component of the Company's managed transition process towards the stepping down of acta Founder and Artistic Director, Neil Beddow, in March 2021. Neil will work alongside the new Director for a transition period over the Winter months. The new Director will work closely with the Artistic Directorate (AD) –

experienced creative members of the core team – in project and programme creation and development.

**The successful candidate will have a proven track record in: - leading an organisation in the field of social change; strategic thinking; business management; success in identifying and securing funds; human resources; partnership working; with a strong commitment to facilitation, and collaborative/adaptive leadership. We are looking for someone to respect and build on acta's strong track record, but with the vision to develop and innovate.**

Working with the Board of Trustees (Council of Management), the Finance & Evaluation Director (FED - other member of Senior Management Team), the Artistic Directorate (AD) and other members of the staff team, the Director will be responsible for providing strategic and operational leadership, managing the staff team, fundraising and income generation, and managing the day to day delivery of the business plan. This will include developing the business plan for 2022-26, and writing the NPO bid to Arts Council England in late 2021.

acta's structure and business practice reflects the company's approach to working with communities, placing equal value on each company member. Whilst responsibility for the overall work of the organisation will be held by the Director, responsibility and accountability for specific areas of work are distributed to individual members of the team. Creation of artistic programme will be joint responsibility of AD and Director. It is expected that, whilst ultimate responsibility will rest with the Director, decision-making about all issues of company planning, projects, programme etc will be reached through facilitated collaborative leadership, leading where possible, to consensus.

The Director will have responsibilities in **four** main areas:

#### **(i) Collaborative leadership & partnership building**

1. Lead the AD to design, develop and implement vision and strategy.
2. Lead and facilitate the AD to review work of company, learn from experience, and develop future programmes.
3. Provide strategic and operational leadership, through continuous review of the business plan towards development of new 2022 -2026 plan; working closely with FED on financial management.
4. Build on existing relationships, and broker new, partnerships to develop acta's breadth of work.
5. Lead on strategic communications, working closely with Communications Coordinator to manage implementation.

#### **(ii) Business operations and management**

1. Overall responsibility for management and delivery of the acta programme.

2. Review and develop an effective operational structure; making best use of limited resources, including a development strategy for the actacentre building.
3. Responsibility for compliance with legal responsibilities eg Health and Safety.
4. Lead the team to diversify communication activities to increase organisational profile and impact e.g. seminars, online digital guide.
5. Lead the team to advocate for, and contribute to, dialogue and debate about community theatre, and to represent and champion the company with key funding bodies and networks at local, national and international levels.
6. With the FED, liaise with and maintain positive relations with senior level officers from funding bodies.

### **(iii) Income generation & bid writing**

1. Lead the fundraising team (Projects Director & Creative Producer) to develop and implement fundraising strategy.
2. Research and identify new funding sources and opportunities for income generation.
3. Write and submit bids and applications for funding, including large-scale bids (£200-400K) eg ACE NPO, National Lottery .
4. Work with the FED to develop project budgets & fundraising targets.

### **(iv) Governance & management**

1. Ensure effective governance is in place and trustees are actively engaged in work of the organisation; to include servicing of board meetings and building an effective board.
2. Responsibility for management of Human Resources, acting as Line Manager for staff members.
3. Lead staff meetings; with whole company, SMT, specific project implementation, to ensure effective operations management.
4. Work with FED to manage evaluation and learning processes and implementation.
5. Work with Board and FED to manage company budgets, and fundraising targets.

## **3 Contract terms & conditions**

**Full-time, based at the acta centre in Bristol.**

**Salary: £42,849 pa**

Main working hours are 9 – 5, Monday – Friday, with some evening and weekend work required; flexible working policy (includes TOIL – no overtime).

Probationary period of 3 months.

30 days annual leave pa.

NEST pension scheme.

## **4 Personal specification - Essential**

### **Values**

- Strong commitment to acta's organisational values, and ability to communicate this persuasively to all stakeholders.
- Demonstrable understanding of acta's work, and relevant experience of the positive impact of community arts and theatre to make positive change for individuals and communities.
- Minimum 3 years' experience at leading an organisation in the field of social change at local, national levels.
- Proven commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity, including development, implementation and monitoring of policies.
- Understanding of, and enthusiasm for, an approach to planning that places inclusion at its heart.

### **Fundraising and resources**

- Proven track record in developing and managing fundraising strategies, and meeting funding targets (£300-£400K pa)
- Proven track record in identifying and securing significant funding from diverse sources including successful major bid writing eg National Lottery, Arts Council, national charities, business.
- Demonstrable perspective on the funding landscape post-EU membership, and Covid-19 impact.
- Minimum 3 years' experience in liaising with Senior Officers/CEO 's of major funders, and other partners.

### **Strategic thinking and business planning**

- Minimum 3 years' experience in developing strategy and business planning, including initiating and building strong strategic partnerships.
- Flexible and adaptive skills; able to react positively to, and adapt business planning, to changes in society; e.g. Climate Change, Covid 19.

### **Programme and company management**

- Relevant experience of at least 3 years in overseeing programme management and delivery.
- Relevant experience in human resources, leading teams, line management, including supervision, team meetings, job and salary reviews, managing of grievance procedures.

### **Personal Qualities**

- Excellent facilitation skills, and commitment to collaborative leadership.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

- Friendly, generous, empathetic and approachable.

### **Person Specification – Desirable**

- Demonstrable and relevant employment in community theatre and/or socially engaged arts field.
- Understanding of cultural policy in UK.
- Experience in leading international collaborations.

## 5 acta background

### a) Summary

acta was founded in 1985, and is committed to individual and social change through encouraging participation in community theatre and related arts.

The company has a national and international reputation for good practice, instigating and leading a number of European projects with funding from EU, working with 13 different countries. acta also has links to companies in South Korea and USA.

The company works with around 500 participants every year. Work is focused on engaging people from most marginalised sections of community; priority areas currently are socially isolated older people; vulnerable young people, including young carers; refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; areas with high indices of deprivation.

acta is a learning company, and is committed to sharing our practice and learning from others, through proactive initiatives eg Seminar programme, festivals, digital learning.

acta has eight core staff, six associates, and additional regular freelance workers.

### b) Vision, values & aims

#### Vision

To bring about positive change for individuals and community through promoting active, creative participation in theatre. To create high quality, relevant theatre with vulnerable and socially isolated people from all generations and cultures through an open access and free creative programme which provides positive and enjoyable shared experiences, building friendships and a shared appreciation of common humanity.

#### Values

- **Access & Participation** -acta exists to provide access to participation in the arts for the most marginalised and excluded sections of society.
- **Ownership** - acta is committed to co-creation of all artistic product, with participants and professional facilitators sharing equal status.
- **Excellence** - Excellence in facilitation, in performance process, in co-production and in the product.
- **Inclusiveness** - acta is committed to providing equality of opportunity to people without privilege, engaging marginalised people and promoting intercultural and intergenerational dialogue through theatre.
- **Partnership** - acta is committed to proactively developing collaborations and partnerships within arts and wider sectors at local, national and international levels.

- **Valuing people** -acta is a caring organisation that listens to and supports vulnerable people, valuing their stories, cultural heritage and life experiences and enabling them to share through making new theatre.

## **Aims**

- To be a learning and reflective organisation, seeking to influence development of community-engaged theatre practice at national and international level.
- Produce an on-going programme of high quality theatre at the actacentre, including national and international guests.
- Create original and innovative theatre which voices untold stories and which excites, entertains, enthrals, and moves audiences.
- Bring together people from different cultures and generations to share and create work together.
- Create opportunities for new participants and workers from diverse communities, while providing a consistent service for existing participants.
- Explore and develop new digital-based artistic product through new partnerships.
- Change the way people see theatre as an elite and expensive art form; to make it accessible, relevant and fun to the majority of people.

## 5 Governance and Staffing structure

### a) Council of Management

acta is governed by a Board of 12 members, who are Directors of the limited company, and trustees of the charity. There is a wide range of expertise and experience from business, charitable and voluntary sector, education, and include participants and ex-employees. The SMT reports directly to the Board, which meets six times each year, with a structure of sub committees in the areas of People, Money and Building, which meet in-between full Board meetings.

### b) Staff Structure

#### Senior Management Team

Director HR and line management; programme management; fundraising and income generation; strategic planning; advocacy.

Finance & evaluation

Director Finances; programme evaluation; communications management.

*(NB New FED job title when Director starts - formerly Executive Director)*

#### Artistic Directorate

Associate Director project delivery, devising, writing, directing; child protection lead

Projects Director project development, delivery, devising, writing, directing; fundraising

Creative Producer project development, delivery and fundraising

Production Manager design & technical support for shows, visual arts facilitator

Comms Coordinator marketing and communications, front of house, building hires

Workshop Assistant Cornerstone outreach and partnership building, and assisting workshops

Cleaner cleaning and buildings support

### c) Artistic Directorate – the vision

The Director will work in close collaboration with the existing Artistic Directorate in the formulation and development of all acta projects and programme; respecting and using their experience and expertise to generate new ideas, identify need, determine positive outcomes and create work which makes social change.

## 7 How to apply

To make an application, please write and submit **two separate documents** as follows:-

- 1) Contact sheet – name, address, telephone and e-mail contact
- 2) Application in 4 sections:-
  - a) Education & training
  - b) Work history
  - c) Referees – contact details for x 2 people who acta can ask for a reference; (we will only take up references upon appointment.)
  - d) Person specification – a written application that explains why you are the best candidate for this role, and how you meet each of the criteria listed in the person specification.

Please send both documents together, as attachments to an email, with the subject line of your email: “Director application,” and send to:-

**[helen@acta-bristol.com](mailto:helen@acta-bristol.com)**

Before the closing date of **21 September 2020** (midday deadline).

Please note that all shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview by the end of September, and interviews are expected to take place at the acta centre, Tuesday 6 – Thursday 8 October.

Appropriate safety precautions will be taken for interviews, and we are committed to ensuring that the interview process is accessible to all shortlisted candidates. (Further details on the interview process will be made available at the shortlisting stage, but please do contact us at any point if there is anything we need to do to ensure the recruitment process is accessible to you.)

We will be recruiting in accordance with our equality and diversity recruitment procedures, so will be making opportunities available to all applicants on a fair basis. However, we are keen to recruit workers representative of the diverse cultural backgrounds of our participants, and **encourage applications from BAME and / or disabled people, who are under-represented in the existing staff team, for this significant new leadership post.**

We believe that the information included in this job pack, together with the acta website, should be sufficient for applicants to make their written applications.

However, if you do have a particular unanswered question at this stage of the process, please email [neil@acta-bristol.com](mailto:neil@acta-bristol.com)