

Chair of the Board

for
Belfast Community Circus School,
Festival of Fools, and Premiere Circus



Are you...

- interested in the arts, circus and street theatre?
- motivated by helping children, young people and communities to thrive, develop and change?
- experienced in leading teams, strategic thinking and building influential networks?
- clear on what makes for great governance?

Do you...

- want to use your talent and commitment to make a difference?
- share our passion for delivering creative, high quality workshops and performances that can transform lives and promote wellbeing?

We are seeking applications from forward thinking individuals for the role of Chair of the Board of Belfast Community Circus School, Festival of Fools and Premiere Circus.

What's on offer...

The position of Chair offers a rewarding experience the opportunity to make an important contribution to the arts sector in NI and a difference to the lives of many. The Boards currently meet six times a year, for a total of around 2.5hrs a time. In addition to this the Chair speaks with the CEO around once a month and attends sub-groups, fundraisers and events as required.

About you...

We will soon be launching our new vision, mission and values.

As Chair, you will:

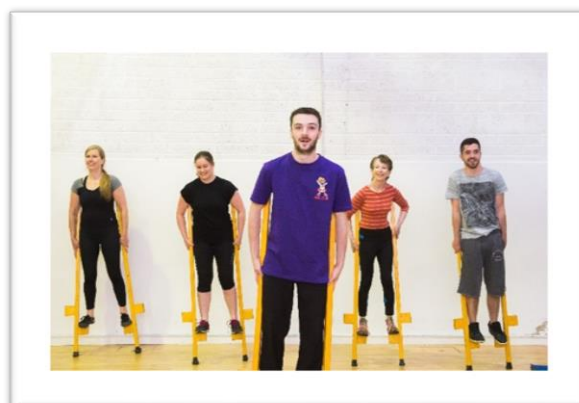
- be keen to play a key role in finalising these and bringing them to life.
- work with the CEO and wider team to ensure even stronger governance, excellent strategic planning and a brilliant approach to operations, management and reporting.
- through a collaborative approach, demonstrate your experience, skills and knowledge of leadership and governance to enable the organisations to thrive.
- challenge and support the team and wider Board to better understand our audiences, impact and potential and to realise growth, resilience and sustainability.
- be motivated by results and seek improvements in our branding, marketing and communications that lead to increases in membership, income and effectiveness.

Do you have some or all of the following skills and interests?

- Strategic and operational planning
- Income generation
- Public policy development
- Community relations
- Health and social care / public health
- Brand development, marketing and communications
- Strategic and values-based partnership development

We know we are unlikely to find someone with extensive skills and experience in all of the above areas. However, the role is broad and the potential to make a difference to the lives of many huge, so if you are interested and would like to have an informal conversation about your own experience and how this may fit what we are looking for, please contact the current CEO, Jenna Hall, to find out more about the role.

(Jenna@BelfastCircus.org)



About the organisations...



Belfast Community Circus School (BCCS) has had a long-standing mission statement is to: "Transform lives and communities through the power of circus arts and street theatre." Although this is currently under-review, the ethos and overall purpose of the School will remain.

Since its inception (1985) BCCS has used circus and street theatre as a tool through which to transform the lives of thousands of children, young people and communities. Through learning new skills and developing their own creative practice together, professional artists have emerged, and others have used what they have gained to excel, develop and progress in other ways. BCCS plays an important part in ensuring many children are 'school ready' and young people flourish.

An independent evaluation has recently identified key outcomes of BCCS's work as contributing to helping children and young people to develop the skills, competencies, and characteristics the World Economic Forum have recognised as people needing for the 21st Century. As a result, the three priority outcomes for our Youth Circus and Itty Bitty programmes are now grouped as follows:

- Try, Fail, Grow
- Safety and Trust
- Mind, Body and Soul

Although currently closed due to Coronavirus, BCCS would typically see at least 600 children and young people participate in classes each week.

In addition to our 'in-house' classes (we have a purpose-built city centre venue that we own) we currently deliver social circus with around 21 partner organisations. Social Circus engages some of the most vulnerable members of NI communities. Furthermore, BCCS performances and workshops attract and inspire audiences, as the impossible becomes possible in front of their eyes, leading to new audiences and increased participation in the arts in NI.

Our city centre venue also provides a safe and high-quality training space for trainers and professional performers, enabling us to help ensure circus really is accessible to everyone.

As a founding member of the CARAVAN circus network, and currently sitting on the Board, we work with other circus organisations from around the world, enabling our attendees and trainers to travel and explore the world of circus on an International level. This, combined with our involvement in a range of other local, national and international boards/networks and groups supports BCCS to bring its vision and mission to life.

Although Coronavirus has had a considerable impact BCCS's work in 2020, it will survive this crisis and is using the enforced closure to take stock, plan, prepare and focus.

Prior to Covid-19, BCCS was forecasting in excess of £600k in income in 2020-21, had 5.4FTE on payroll and employed around 30-35 freelance trainers each month. Income has been hit hard, but expenditure has been reduced to match. At this stage no redundancies of salaried staff are expected.

FESTIVAL of FOOLS

Founded in 2004, this street performance festival showcasing circus arts is Internationally recognised and traditionally takes place over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Festival of Fools aims to bring street arts to the public with no barriers, it is free to attend, inclusive and accessible. The typical annual budget for Festival of Fools is around £100-£120k.

Festival of Fools (FoF) is registered as a charity, has its own charity number, bank account, company status etc.

In 2019, 94.4% of audience members surveyed said that they came into the city centre specifically to attend Festival of Fools, with 99% stating that they would wish to attend again in 2020.

FoF invigorates and animates the city, attracts thousands to take part in arts and culture and provides opportunities for learning, creative development and civic engagement.

The festival features a mix of local and International acts as well as performances from groups taught by Belfast Community Circus School. For the past three years Festival of Fools has hosted elements of a three-year Creative Europe programme called Mysteries and Drolls. This has involved working in partnership with companies in Italy, Germany, Spain and Poland to explore the role of the ancient and anarchic jester and buffoon in contemporary circus and street theatre.

Festival 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. Festival of Fools has been hit hard by Coronavirus. but its value is widely known and understood. As such, the team are working hard to understand what festivals may look like in the future.



BCCS is the parent company of Premiere Circus (PC) and 100% of profits are invested into BCCS. Premiere typically secures around £125k in income each year. (Pre-Covid-19.)

A performance agency providing top class circus acts for events across the country and beyond – creating work for freelance artists and generating income to be invested back into the Circus School.

Premiere Circus provides acts for clients including councils, event production companies, corporate clients and charities and community groups. Our post event surveys demonstrate the work is valued, perceived to be relevant and of high quality. All clients are asked to complete a survey after their event. In 2019-20, all confirmed they were extremely likely to recommend our work to others.

“Great variety of acts and always evolving” - Vickie White, Balmoral Show

Our pool of artists includes jugglers, unicyclists, acrobats and more – all of whom are insured and trained to perform observing the highest levels of health and safety.

We have provided entertainment for local events including the Titanic Maritime Festival, Belfast Spring Fair, Lord Mayor's Day and many more including St Patrick's Day, Halloween and Christmas events throughout the country and beyond. Premiere also provides teambuilding adult circus workshops for corporate clients, providing a fresh solutions-focussed option for Away Days, under the name **The Circus Experience**.

What we are looking for:

Role – Chair of the Board

Organisational status:

- Belfast Community Circus School – registered charity and company limited by guarantee,
- Premiere Circus – company limited by guarantee – BCCS is the parent company of Premiere Circus.
- Festival of Fools – registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

We are seeking an exceptional individual to step into the non-executive role of Chair of the Board, to lead and shape the future of Belfast Community Circus School, Premiere Circus and Festival of Fools.

This is an interesting and challenging role requiring an individual who is creative, influential and people orientated, ideally with a strong interest in the arts and social circus.

The Chair will play a pivotal role in the governance of the organisation and, in partnership with the CEO and wider Board members, will steer the strategic direction for the organisation.

The Chair will act as a strong ambassador for all three organisations and the arts/cultural sector as a whole.

The Chair will be a trustee and, as such, will serve as both a charity trustee and company director of the organisation. In addition to chairing the Board of Belfast Community Circus, they will also be the Chair and company director of Festival of Fools and Premiere Circus.

The Board manages the business of the three organisations and may exercise all the powers of the trust to ensure compliance with its charitable objects, company and charity law.

In the interests of safeguarding, alongside all trustee appointments, the appointment of the Chair will be subject to an enhanced access NI disclosure check.

This is a crucial time for all three organisations, as we seek to move forward into the new decade and embrace a period of change. After a necessary period of calm, work to reposition BCCS as one of the leading arts organisation's in Northern Ireland, and one of the leading circus schools across the UK and Europe. For Festival of Fools and Premiere Circus, further growth and development are on the horizon.

How much time is needed?

- The board meets six times per year, for around 2-2.5 hours per time, to cover all three organisations
- Board sub-committees meet on an as-needed basis throughout the year.
- Regular meetings and telephone and email communication with the CEO
- Attendance at events, shows and Festivals organised by BCCS, Premiere Circus, Festival of Fools and partner organisations, as appropriate

Key responsibilities:

Internal:

- Provide clear leadership to the Board of Trustees and ensure probity in governance
- Provide leadership, support and appraisal to the CEO and wider team, where appropriate.
- Hold the CEO to account for the effective management and delivery of strategic and operational plans across BCCS, FoF and PC.
- Ensure high quality succession planning across all areas of the three organisations.
- Chair all Board meetings and Annual General Meetings, unless agreed otherwise in advance.

External:

- Support the CEO and wider team to develop strong relationships with relevant organisations, stakeholders, funders and networks.
- Advocate on behalf of all three organisations
- Identify opportunities for partnership, development and growth
- Represent all three organisations
- Contribute to the fundraising and income generation activities of all three companies.

Other:

- Advocate on behalf of all three organisations
- Play a key role in the recruitment of senior staff and additional Board members.
- Support the CEO to develop and maintain positive relationships with key stakeholders including the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and other major funders.
- Model and support the values all three organisations

Person specification:

The Chair is expected to abide by the three organisations policies, procedures and guidance documents and to model the organisations values and behaviours in all that they do.

The Chair will:

- be a committed and enthusiastic advocate and leading voice for circus, street theatre and the wider arts sector.
- understand and be able to articulate the power of the arts to impact positively on the lives of children, young people and adults.
- be a champion for how the arts impact positively on individuals and communities.
- play a key role in holding us to account and ensuring we live our values.

You will have the skills to lead the board effectively and experience of creating a diverse, inclusive culture.

Working with the board and the CEO you will lead and embed change in a manner which inspires, motivates and engages different audiences.

You will have a demonstrable interest in and commitment to the mission, vision and values of the organisations and possess significant strategic vision and abilities in your area of expertise.

Your prior boardroom experience and strong influencing skills will combine to inspire the trust and confidence of people across the organisation and externally.

Key to the Chair's role will be ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction and leading the board in holding the CEO to account for the creative and financial performance of all three organisations.

We are hoping to find someone with all or some of the following skills and experience:

- Track record of senior leadership success in a corporate, private, public sector or third sector environment
- Outstanding interpersonal and ambassadorial skills
- Excellent people management skills
- Outstanding communication skills
- Corporate governance
- In-depth knowledge and experience of strategic planning.
- In-depth knowledge and experience of budgetary, risk and asset management
- Non-executive chair/trustee experience
- Ability to harness diversity
- An adaptive approach and strategic mind-set.
- A willingness to devote time and effort to create positive change for attendees.

As Chair, this individual will ensure budgets and expenditure are in line with legal obligations. They will strategise for asset management and risk management, and will develop productive and supportive professional relationships with the board and CEO.

What next?

If you are interested in learning more or an informal conversation, please get in touch with the current CEO, Jenna Hall. (Jenna@belfastcircus.org)

To apply please send the following to Jenna@BelfastCircus.org :

- A covering letter laying out your vision, what draws you to the role and what you will bring to the organisations
- Your CV
- Names and contact details of two referees

We have set an initial deadline for applications of the 9th September 2020.

Our current Chair, Alison Anderson, has agreed to remain in position until a replacement has been identified and a handover period agreed. Therefore, if you are interested in this position, but unable to meet the above deadline, please contact Jenna to register your interest and discuss the options available.