

GRAEae

Annual Review 2013-14



A note from the Chair

‘This was a year of rights reignited, of tales where nothing was quite what it seemed...’

Once again, Graeae worked hard to push boundaries, to challenge expectations and to raise a smile. *The Iron Man* continued clanking his way around the country. *The Threepenny Opera* went to a number of important regional theatres attracting positive reviews and great audience feedback. Over the summer, the stunning and thought provoking production of *The Limbless Knight* enthralled audiences at Greenwich+Docklands International Festival while tackling issues of disability and human rights head on.

The entertainment and quality was evident, so too was the intrinsic commitment to creating different platforms for Deaf and disabled performers, creatives and audiences. Our work took us from main stages, to parks, town squares and classrooms. As ever, our team worked tirelessly and were willing to keep taking risks, continuing to build the company's reputation. We also strengthened our partnerships and continued to receive invaluable support from funders

including Arts Council England, as well as from the corporate sector with companies such as Paragon Management UK Ltd.

As always, we have to balance our achievements against the challenging backdrop experienced by many Deaf and disabled people. Scope's review of attitudes to disabled people found that over a third of respondents felt that disabled people were not as productive as everyone else. One in five disabled people who responded felt that attitudes to disability had worsened since the 2012 Paralympics. Added to which, many disabled people were once more subject to medicalisation as their impairments were reassessed for state benefits.

I believe this wider context reinforces the need for Graeae's work; it strengthens our drive to continue to build partnerships across sectors and make high quality work that resonates and acts as a stimulus for change. There is still much to be done.

Dawn Langley, Chair

Director's Report

Graeae has always been a company which makes theatre that matters and 2013-2014 has been a true testimony to this.



A new urgency has both propelled and underpinned the company through this last year. True to its ethos, Graeae has remained responsive to the current climate and not shied from its responsibility to highlight the complexity of political and economic situations faced by Deaf and disabled people (including, most notably, cuts to the Independent Living Fund and Access to Work). Our productions of *The Limbless Knight* and *The Threepenny Opera* have placed these issues centre stage.

We have also been able to share the Graeae ethos of inclusive practice and aesthetics of access with international partners in Albania, Brazil, Bangladesh and Pakistan. This work is also focussed on developing Deaf and disabled people to become leaders and reaffirm the global necessity for equal rights.

I have an inherent fear of being 'out of sight out of mind' and the wonderful words of Gloria Gaynor: 'You think I'd crumble, You think I'd lay down and die, Oh no not I!' spring to mind. I refuse to allow the company to thwart

its artistic ambition, to scale down and to slowly crumble away. But I am also mindful that we need allies and support from companies that have a large infrastructure that can take us to places we might not get to on our own. We have had some truly extraordinary partnerships this year with New Wolsey Theatre, Nottingham Playhouse, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Birmingham Rep, The Roundhouse, Immediate Theatre and British Council; and on our wonderful new writing initiative Write to Play, we're thrilled to have partnered with the National Theatre Studio, Soho Theatre and the Royal Court. We're also continuously grateful to Paragon, responsible for the build of our beautiful home.

An unexpected but extremely welcome and ongoing partner has been EY (formerly Ernst and Young), with whom we have developed a training programme in the form of workshops facilitated by Graeae to EY's senior staff. This is a fair exchange of resources while supporting our work and artistic programme.

So, all in all, this year has been an extraordinary journey of new possibilities, new partners and a renewed fight within us to stake our claim to be here as a theatre company and as Deaf and disabled people.

Jenny Sealey, MBE, CEO / Artistic Director

In 2013/14 we...

- Reached audiences of over **22,000**
- **Employed 174 people** of which 79 were Deaf or disabled
- **Reached 4,640 people** through our outreach, training and learning programme
- Toured to **9 festivals** and **11 venues** across the UK
- Performed at **3 festivals** across the world



Vision and mission

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre, breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing disabled artists centre stage.

Graeae champions accessibility and provides a platform for new generations of Deaf and disabled talent through the creation of trail-blazing theatre, at home and internationally.

Our four strategic objectives are:

- 1 World-class theatre:** creating and touring high quality, high impact theatre that is unmistakably Graeae's, providing a platform for the skill, vision and excellence of Deaf and disabled artists
- 2 Training and education:** creating a programme of inclusive activities which engage, inspire and nurture emerging and professional artists
- 3 Championing accessibility:** creating, operating, supporting and advising on accessible environments and practice
- 4 Excellence in governance:** developing best practice across the company through robust policies and procedures

In promoting and producing world-class theatre, Graeae seeks to dismantle barriers to employment in the arts for Deaf and disabled people across the UK.

Achievements 2013-14

2013/14 was extremely productive year for Graeae. Despite a shifting funding climate and it being a challenging period for Deaf and disabled people across the UK, Graeae continued to explore new arenas and expand its international programme.

The company's most significant achievements include:

- The incredible nationwide tour of *The Iron Man*. Directed by Associate Director Amit Sharma with a re-developed script, a new set and ensemble cast, this show went from strength to strength. Thousands of young people across the country were entranced by the show's wit, heart and magic.
- *The Limbless Knight*, a festival piece unlike any other. An arresting and challenging performance that explored notions of identity and humanity. We were particularly proud of our audiences who gave us heartfelt responses when we asked 'What does it mean to be alive?'
- *Write to Play* - A new writing project that brought together the finest literary talent from some of the best theatres in the country to support five Deaf and disabled writers to build skills and develop their first full length piece.
- *Deck the Stalls* - Our Young Ambassadors, affectionately known as the Rollettes, stepping up and performing in front of packed out crowds at Lyric Hammersmith and Theatre Royal Stratford East
- Helping achieve true sector change amongst some of the most important theatres and arts organisations in the country through partnerships, collaborations, advocacy and a willingness to learn.
- Establishing a strong framework for building links around the world. 13/14 was the year in which Graeae worked in Albania, Brazil, Bangladesh, Chile, Germany and Pakistan, opening up opportunities for further collaborations in the future.



My Graeae year by Amelia Cavallo

‘***The Threepenny Opera* will go down as one of my proudest moments**’

I am a blind actress and feel like my journey with Graeae actually started about seven years ago when I walked into *The Flower Girls* audition room as a fresh faced drama school graduate. I knew from that day that I wanted to stay close to this company, and have been lucky enough to do so since.

I have taught for Graeae, worked on a number of R&D's and followed their circus journey all the way to the Paralympic Opening Ceremony as a sway pole performer. I've loved everything I've done with Graeae and kept hoping that I would get to work on one of their theatre productions. That chance came with *The Threepenny Opera*. Not only did it give me the ability to stretch my Actor Musician muscles with an exciting and challenging piece, it allowed me to work for the first time on a fully accessible large scale production with a team of amazing disabled and non-disabled theatre practitioners. It also meant playing what will probably go down as one of my favourite characters of all time in a piece that I think still holds uncanny relevance despite its age.

I don't know how to praise Graeae enough. I have spent my professional years working mostly within "mainstream" settings which always means dealing with a large learning curve for those who are new to the disability world. With *The Threepenny Opera*, I felt taken care of from the moment I entered the audition room, all the way until the last bow. Jenny Sealey and Pete Rowe (the directors) were so clear about access as a necessity and a creative outlet, and more importantly, they and the production team made me feel comfortable to express my needs, even if it was in the middle of a very busy and tight tech rehearsal. They always made time for everyone, an incredible feat given the tight schedule to which we were working.

Overall, *The Threepenny Opera* will go down as one of my proudest moments and I know many of my fellow cast mates feel the same. We kept describing it as though lightning was striking, not only because we all got on so well, but because we knew beyond a doubt that we were doing something totally unique, important and beautiful.

Amelia went on to star in the Theatre Royal Stratford East pantomime Beauty and the Beast and perform at the Royal Festival Hall.

Image: Patrick Baldwin

THE THREEPENNY OPERA



I don't think I've enjoyed a Threepenny Opera as much as #3popera currently in Ipswich. And I've seen a few!
@SamsJeremy



A very timely production of *The Threepenny Opera* was an excellent reminder to us that people want - and need - political theatre. The updated lyrics from Jeremy Sams struck a chord with us all.

It was an extraordinary experience and one where tenacity for equality of representation on stage reaped rewards. The five way co-production with New Wolsey Theatre, Nottingham Playhouse, Birmingham Rep and West Yorkshire Playhouse was not without teething problems, but the learning curve for all of us was steep and fruitful.

“Watching this production is like being carried along in a protest march, banners in your face.”

The Stage

“*The Threepenny Opera* was not only an edgy, forthright and powerful piece of entertainment but also focussed my political understanding surrounding disability rights and welcomed me into a new community. The change I saw in myself during the production was invaluable.”
Joey Hickman, Actor Musician



Each time I was on the stage, I felt like I was doing something that brought the world a step closer to facing and addressing our current social issues. *The Threepenny Opera* may be over, but its legacy lives on.

Victoria Oruwari (Mrs Peachum)

One of the most challenging but HUGELY rewarding projects I've ever had the honour to work on. I now feel my life is rich with knowledge, fight, and a wonderful array of lifelong friends who I never wish to be parted from.

Stacey Ghent, Actor Musician

It truly is a show conceived with magnificence.

The Big Issue



THE IRON MAN

***The Iron Man* clonked, clanked and wowed audiences across the UK.**

The amount of energy the cast and crew gave to each performance really did make the show a magical experience for everyone who saw it.

Following the amazing response we received in 2011, we had the opportunity to revisit the brilliant aspects of this show and add to them. A new set, a slight change in script and a catchy musical number enabled us to engage family audiences in Cardiff, Ipswich, Skegness, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford (East London) and Birmingham.

All performances were completely packed (one show had a thousand school children!) and it was wonderful to see audiences engaged, thrilled and with massive smiles on their faces.



International work

A report by Jenny Sealey

Since 2012, Graeae's international profile has grown exponentially and in 2013/14 we were thrilled to add the following strings to our bow on a global scale:



The *Reasons to be Cheerful* cast performed a concert version of the show, wowing audiences in Rio.

We launched a new circus skills training initiative with Crescer e Viver, Rio's largest social circus company. This UK/Brazil partnership worked with six disabled artists from the UK (all trained for the Paralympic Opening Ceremony) and five Deaf and disabled people from Rio, resulting in a newly devised show, *Belonging*, premiering at the Roundhouse Circus Festival with follow-up performances at Crescer e Viver Rio and Sao Paulo Circus Festival. This is an ongoing relationship working toward building a global network of Deaf and disabled aerial artists.

Amit Sharma (Associate Director) led a re-working of *The Iron Man* in Albania with local Deaf and disabled Actor Musicians. Additionally, the same process is being developed with various schools and institutes in Pakistan led by Jodi-Alissa Bickerton (Training and Learning Manager).

I am developing an ensemble of Deaf and disabled artists in Dhaka, Bangladesh as part of an ongoing learning process leading to a production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2016.

There is a terrific, often soulful, music and sound design from Lewis Gibson, and flashes of comedy...it is pioneering in the way its uses many different kinds of language - physical, spoken and sign - to create layers of meaning.

Lyn Gardner, *The Guardian* on *Belonging*



The Limbless Knight

The Limbless Knight - A Tale of Rights Reignited, premiered at Greenwich+Docklands International Festival with a follow-up performance at Liberty Festival on London's South Bank.

The production, devised by ex-servicemen and a group of newly fledged aerial artists from the Paralympic Opening Ceremony, was based on The Rite of Spring and the role of sacrifice. Human rights and disability politics were at the helm and it asked the audience **'what does it mean to be alive?'**

You need to have something to live for, otherwise you're only existing.
Enjoying every single moment of existence, whether it be good or bad.
Having the freedom to feel the wind, enjoy the company of loved ones.

This production was dedicated to our protagonist ex-serviceman Paul Burns, who passed away the week before rehearsals.

'Like being hit by a brick wrapped in a beautiful velvet cushion'
@MikScarlet

@graeae extended the political potential of circus to discuss the pressing issue of government cuts in #LimblessKnight #gdif2013
Congrats! Keren Zaiontz
@staticfrizz19h





My Graeae year by Pat Provis

I felt - and still feel - highly honoured to have been asked to take part in Graeae's production of *The Limbless Knight*.

The Limbless Knight covered themes of war, death, disability, ability and human rights to name but a few, all of which as former soldiers (and human beings) we had come across in one form or another.

Not only did I feel honoured that Jenny had the confidence in me to be able to perform to a high standard, but also that I was able to deliver lines which reflected the experiences of tens of thousands of injured soldiers across the world while conveying (as part of the company) the physical and mental scars of war in front of hundreds of people. One only had to look into the eyes of the audience as we told the story to see how much it moved them.

Never in my life did I think I'd end up in a play that was so important for so many reasons; real people, real lives & real stories. I can most definitely say I have grown in confidence as a person and look forward to any opportunity to perform in the future.

Since the Graeae performances, I have become far more confident and have been cast in two productions and a documentary for the BBC, all of which will be screened in 2015.

Pat Provis served with the 1st Battalion of The Royal Welsh Fusiliers.



From its start to the finish with a dedication to one of the show's cast and co-creators Paul Burns, who sadly died during a charity bike ride, the show is thoroughly entertaining and enchanting. A must see for all the family, whether they come away with a head full of questions like me or just smiling at the beauty and childlike wonder of the show.

The Huffington Post

Write to Play

...turning the page on new writing...

A report by Chloe Todd Fordham

In October 2013, we launched the very first year of **Write to Play**, a new writing initiative committed to developing the skills and experience of five Deaf and disabled playwrights in partnership with the Royal Court Theatre, Soho Theatre and the National Theatre Studio in London.

We received over 40 written applications from playwrights across the country, and after much deliberation offered places to five talented writers: Rosaleen McDonagh, Tom Wentworth, Sean Burn, Nicky Werenowska and Amy Bethan Evans, writers we felt would inspire us, challenge us, and make us see the world in new ways. They have done exactly that.

The programme involves a week-long intensive 'introduction to playwriting' workshop, the opportunity to work 1:1 with a mentor across the year, three opportunities for the writers to explore short dramatic extracts with actors and a director, and to put that work in front of an audience, six three-hour specialist workshops led by leading practitioners, and a full length play commission.

The smallish **Write to Play** family of four partner organisations and five writers has grown exponentially over this last year into a huge network of over 90 disabled and non-disabled practitioners and industry professionals from all over the country, all of whom have nurtured, supported, advised and guided Tom, Rosaleen, Nicky, Amy and Sean on this amazing journey, and who have learnt from them too.

Chloe Todd Fordham is Write to Play Co-ordinator at Graeae.



The aim of **Write to Play** is not only to develop five new writers, taking their careers to the next level, but also to support them through the writing of five new plays.

We are very grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for their support of the Write to Play programme.

Images: Patrick Baldwin

We can't wait to see what they come up with!

My Graeae year by Tom Wentworth

It's been an amazing year being one of the writers on Graeae's Write to Play programme.

For me, the **Write to Play** year has been one long party - a sitting in the corner of the room with a drink and notepad kind of party (my favourite kind!). With regular visits to London for mentoring, workshops and rehearsals, I've had plenty of time to get to know Graeae as a company. All five of us have been treated as equals, given opportunities to develop and share our work and have been given generous access to Graeae's knowledge, resources and professional weight.

Spending this year with the Graeae team has also broadened my thoughts about wider society. In the year when life-threatening benefits cuts have gripped the nation's consciousness, Graeae has been not only responding through its artistic programme (with productions including *The Threepenny Opera*, which I was lucky enough to see in Birmingham) but also through social networks, video conversations, hosting think-tanks and by starting conversations. Graeae uses its power very effectively to bring about change. Again, we writers have been part of this.

The year has also been about networking and increased visibility with organisations like the National Theatre, Soho Theatre and the Royal Court. However, most of all it has allowed me to get to know the wonderful people at Graeae with whom I hope to carry on partying.



“Spending this year with the Graeae team has also broadened my thoughts about wider society.”

Creative learning

A report by Jodi-Alissa Bickerton

The young people and communities across the UK that we've collaborated artistically with in 2013/14 have helped to pave the way for theatre makers now and into the next three years.

Over Easter, we collaborated with aerial artists and directors from Brazil to deliver circus workshops to local schools Fortismere and Blanche Nevile in North London while in the summer, we delivered learning programmes alongside our productions of *The Limbless Knight* and *The Iron Man*.

For *The Iron Man*, we ran Artistic Residencies at schools across the UK, exploring themes within the story which resulted in performances

in schools from young people with puppets they had created. We also reconnected with George Green's School and Goldsmiths University in a new, politically driven, human rights outreach project alongside *The Limbless Knight*. The show was performed directly opposite the school in Island Gardens in June, with students sharing articles from the UN Convention's Rights of the Child.

Our Young Artistic Advisors (affectionately known as The Rollettes) did us proud, opening one of the performances of *Belonging* at the Roundhouse at Easter, as well as performing a self-devised Christmas show which opened pantomimes across theatres in East and West London.



Image: Patrick Baldwin

I've watched other people doing this [performing on stage], but I never thought it would actually be me.

Graee Young Artist (Age 13)

Having the opportunity to meet the Brazilian artists and explore clowning skills was a unique experience and one the students have been discussing since. They were captivated by the artistic values of the artists and saw how entertainment and happiness were fundamental in life and art.

Teacher, Fortismere School (*Belonging* outreach workshop)

Championing accessibility

A report by Helen Jackson-Lyall & Robin Bray Hurren

This year, we have continued to develop creative approaches to access both on and off the stage. Each project we work on, from a half day workshop to a three month tour, is approached with a deep commitment to access to theatre for Deaf and disabled people - as arts practitioners, artists and audience members.

Our home at Bradbury Studios in Hackney acts as a living model of our commitment to working accessibly, and provides a creative and welcoming space for the wide variety of organisations and individuals who work with us, or hire the space.

The aesthetics of access are something we continually explore, and over the last year we cemented our reputation for skilfully weaving captioning, sign language and audio description into every performance in an imaginative and creative way.

Alongside the access features within the performances, we continue to develop access tools such as BSL synopses and trailers, Easy Read show synopses, audio flyers, and tactile set models, to provide diverse audiences with a rich and meaningful experience. Jenny Sealey (Artistic Director/CEO) and Amit Sharma (Associate Director) also share this expertise with leaders in the arts and creative industries in the form of Access Training sessions, where creative approaches to accessibility are explored through practical exercises and discussion.





A truly breathtaking collaboration between Graeae and Circo Crescer e Viver.



The Huffington Post on *Belonging*



The fable's beauty became all the more magical for its scenery, massive puppets and setting.



The Latest 7 on *The Iron Man*



Images: Patrick Baldwin

Support us

At Graeae, we are proud to be at the forefront of disabled-led arts and to advocate inclusion and diversity in the industry. With your help we can ensure there are more opportunities for Deaf and disabled people to participate fully in theatre and the arts - as practitioners and audience members.

Creating theatre for the future - how you can help



Donate online / standing order

All the details you need to make a donation online or to set up a standing order can be found at:

www.graeae.org/support-us/

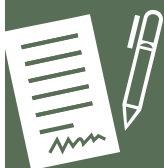
or **send a cheque** to "Graeae Theatre Company", address on page 24.



Text Donate £5

Text: GRAE03 £5 to 70070

(or substitute another amount of your choice).



Legacies

If you would like to discuss leaving a legacy to Graeae please contact Kevin Walsh, Operations Director, on tel: **020 7613 6904** or email: kevin@graeae.org

Your donations support our work in three areas:

1 A new training programme

Graeae is seeking support for a one-year skills development programme for emerging deaf and disabled artists. By working with drama schools and industry professionals we will offer the very best boost to those commencing a career in the arts. Your support would help the next generation find a voice.

2 Productions

Graeae is collaborating with artists from all over the world and the best theatres in the UK, but it is a tough environment to get financial backing. Your support could help make fascinating theatre happen.

3 Outreach programmes

By reaching young people in schools, we can help inform society's treatment of Deaf and disabled people in the future.

Many thanks

to all the Graeae patrons
and Ambassadors in the
last year...



Jenny Agutter OBE and Jez Scarratt



Left to right: Andrew Green, Amit Sharma, Matt Bray, Sadie Frost, Dawn Bray & Jenny Sealey



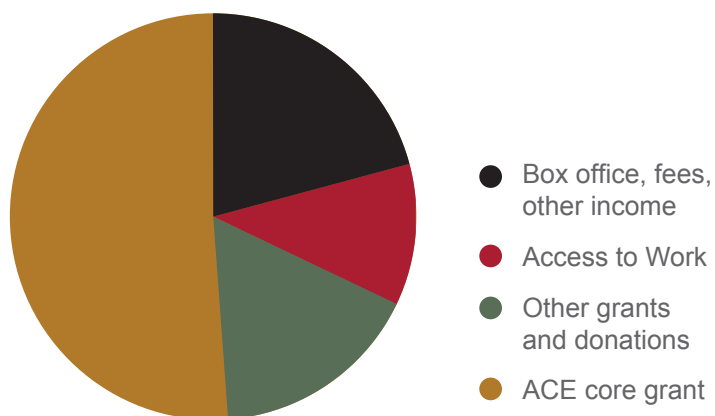
Richard Wilson OBE and Milton Lopes



Dame Harriet Walter DBE and Jenny Sealey

Financial year ended 31 March 2014 (2013-14)

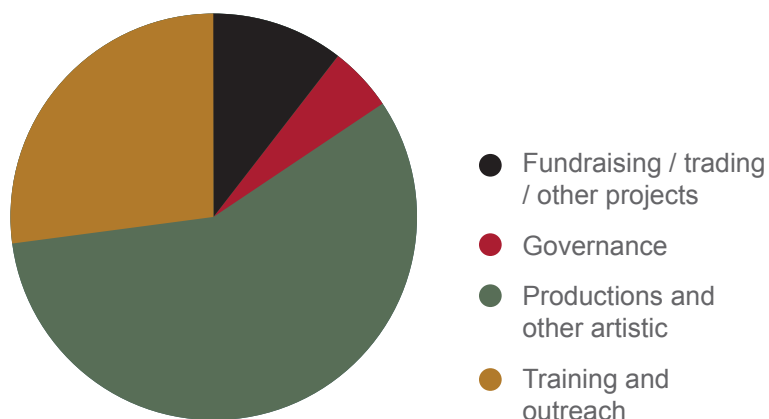
2013-14 Income



Where the money comes from:

- 52%** Arts Council England provides core revenue funding for Graeae.
- 17%** Trusts, foundations and individual donations provide essential funding for Graeae's productions, training and outreach programmes.
- 11%** Funds from the Department of Work and Pensions "Access to Work" scheme support the access costs for disabled people in employment.
- 20%** Box office and venue fees, fees from training and workshops, and the hire of space and equipment make up the balance of Graeae's income.

2013-14 Expenditure



Financial activities for 2013-14

£

Income	+1,096,251
Share of the costs of buildings and equipment allocated to 2013-14 (depreciation)	- 114,464
Other costs	- 1,027,816
Expenditure	-1,142,280
Transfers from restricted and designated funds	+54,814
Added to unrestricted general funds (reserves)	+8,785

For further information see the 2013-14 financial statements for Graeae on the Charity Commission website or contact info@graeae.org for a copy. The opinion of the statutory auditor on the 2013-14 financial statements was unqualified.

With many thanks...

There are many people and organisations whose generous financial support make our work possible.

Graeae is part of Arts Council England's National Portfolio and we receive core funding for our activities. However, our touring and training programmes would not be possible without continuing support from trusts and foundations. We would like to thank all the trusts, foundations and individuals who have supported our work over the last year.

We would also like to thank the continued support of Paragon Management UK Ltd, who have been there for Graeae since the redevelopment of Bradbury Studios in 2009. Furthermore, since 2013, much of our work would not be possible without the support of EY, who have become a major partner, particularly on our training and learning programme.



We joyfully acknowledge all our Young Artistic Advisors and their families for their rich contribution to Graeae's Youth Programme. Also all the young, local theatre makers who are part of our ongoing Hackney Partnership Next Generation project with Immediate Theatre and Huddleston Centre.

Young Artistic Advisors

Evie Jones
Jemima Williams
Neri Bahceci
Kasha Konsowicz
Quley-David Francis
Robyn Herbert
Plus many contributing young artists

We have worked with many artists, educators, schools, colleges, universities and community partners over the last year. In particular we would like to thank the following for their commitment to and support of our creative learning programmes:

Discover Young Hackney
Greenmead School
Lyric Hammersmith Theatre
Project Phakama & Charlotte McCabe
Rose Bruford College
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
Theatre Royal Stratford East

Patrons

Jenny Agutter OBE
Sir Peter Blake KBE
Mat Fraser
Sadie Frost
Nabil Shaban
Dame Harriet Walter DBE
Richard Wilson OBE

Board of Trustees

Emma Dunton
Avis Johns
Dr Dawn Langley (Chair)
Amy Martin
Judith Mellor, OBE
Dr Calvin Pike

Consultants

Finance Barbara Simmonds
Development & Fundraising
Claire Greenhalgh
Producer Hetty Shand
Communications & PR Angie Klein
HR Julie Fewtrell

Staff

Artistic Director / CEO Jenny Sealey MBE
Executive Director Judith Kilvington*
Operations Director Kevin Walsh
Finance Director Charles Mills
Associate Director Amit Sharma
Training & Learning Manager Jodi-Alissa Bickerton
Training & Learning Co-ordinator Nadine Renton*
Access Manager Michael Achtman*
Creative Access Co-ordinator Robin Bray-Hurren
Marketing & Development Manager Liz Rose*
Projects Producer Emma Dunstan
Write to Play Co-ordinator Chloe Todd Fordham
Finance Assistant Suks Malka
Administrative Assistant Adam Bambrough*

*No longer in post

Recently joined Graeae

Access & Production Co-ordinator Helen Jackson-Lyall
Marketing & Development Manager Richard Matthews
Administrative Assistant Kate Baiden



Follow Graeae on Twitter: @graeae

Like Graeae on Facebook: www.facebook.com/graeae

This document is available in alternative formats.

Please contact us for more information access@graeae.org

Graeae Theatre Company

Bradbury Studios, 138 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DY

Tel: 020 7613 6900 Email: info@graeae.org Website: www.graeae.org

