



## **Information for prospective Graeae Board members**

### **Graeae: A force for change in world-class theatre**

#### **Vision**

We will create world-class accessible theatre, which breaks down barriers, challenges preconceptions and places D/deaf and disabled artists centre stage.

#### **Mission**

Graeae's mission is to ignite artistic curiosity, pioneer a radical dramatic language, champion accessibility and provide a platform and opportunities for new generations of D/deaf and disabled artists, locally, nationally and internationally, through the creation of trail-blazing theatre.

#### **Values**

Graeae is a disabled-led company, founded on the need to tackle social injustice, discrimination and exclusion. It is fuelled by the pursuit of inclusion and artistic excellence and champions D/deaf and disabled people in the arts.

#### **Our History**

Graeae was founded in 1980 by Nabil Shaban and Richard Tomlinson. Their shared vision was to dispel images of defencelessness, together with prejudices and popular myths, around disabled people... through theatre, workshops and training.

By May 1980, a company of disabled performers was established to perform the first ever Graeae play *Sideshow*.

Since then, Graeae has achieved an international reputation as a pioneer of accessibility in world-class theatre, with the original impetus of its founders still at its very core. Nabil Shaban remains a patron of the company.

#### **Background**

Artistically led by Jenny Sealey MBE, Graeae's signature characteristic is the compelling creative integration of sign language and audio description, which engages with both disabled and non-disabled audiences. Championing accessibility and providing a platform for new generations of artists, Graeae leads the way in pioneering, trail-blazing theatre.

The original disabled-led theatre company, Graeae remains firmly rooted at the forefront of its field in the UK, with the valuable patronage of many high profile artists, directors and actors, including Sir Peter Blake CBE, Jenny Agutter OBE and Richard Wilson OBE.

Not only does Graeae produce outstanding theatre, but the company delivers extensive training programmes and opportunities for aspiring and established actors, directors and writers. Additionally, Graeae inspires and leads best practice - creating, supporting and advising on the development of accessible environments for all theatre lovers, everywhere.

Based at Bradbury Studios in Hackney, East London, it is no surprise that Graeae's home sets the benchmark for inclusive practice. The award-winning building, the first of its kind in the UK, has creative access at the core of its design.

We are often asked how Graeae is pronounced, we appreciate it may not be obvious, so we are happy to share the correct pronunciation: "grey-eye".

### **Graeae and Access**

Graeae is committed to inclusive working practice for the artists and staff with whom we work, and an accessible theatrical experience for our audiences.

For each project and working situation, we provide bespoke access solutions e.g. arranging access at venues for productions and workshops, coordinating access support, or arranging adaptive technology to facilitate the creative process.

Graeae is committed to pioneering and evolving the 'aesthetics of access', continually exploring new ways to weave in layers of accessibility and communication (such as BSL interpretation and audio description). The 'aesthetics of access' is now a recognised signature characteristic across Graeae productions.

Access is a basic right and requirement, a continually evolving methodology that enhances the theatrical and professional landscape; accessibility enables theatre practitioners and audiences to create, engage with and enjoy our work.

### **Looking to the future...**

Since 2017, we have been looking at the fundamentals of what Graeae is all about, how we are structured, how we create work and how we are funded. This long term strategizing, which was intended to cover the period 2022-2032, has taken a sudden leap following a significant increase in rent. We are now dealing with a financial threat to the ongoing operation of our business, but creativity, need and ambition form the core of our plans moving forward.

We are some way along this journey and have reached broad agreement on a Strategic Plan which sets out the case for change.

Under the new strategy, we will build on the success of the last few years to deliver a programme that meets the needs of the sector and enables us to remain world-leaders in placing D/deaf and disabled artists centre-stage.

The strategy comprises eight strategic aims. These are:

a. **Create world-class theatre:** produce and tour high quality, high impact theatre that is unmistakably Graeae's, providing a platform for the skill, vision and excellence of D/deaf and disabled artists.

- b. **Find new audiences:** for Graeae and for the wider industry. Ensure the work has a lasting impact across England, unleashing creativity in regions and communities, working with groups that have little access to art and culture and on a variety of platforms.
- c. **Champion accessibility:** through partnerships with the wider theatre sector on national and international platforms creating, operating, supporting and advising on accessible environments and practice.
- d. **Nurture talent:** create a programme of inclusive training and education activities. Enable emerging and professional D/deaf and disabled artists to shine through a programme that engages and inspires.
- e. Promote **excellent governance** and leadership across the company, the theatre sector and other businesses.
- f. **Diversify and collaborate:** invest in partnerships, share resources and identify diverse income streams to reduce reliance on public support and ensure a stable base for future growth.
- g. **Explore new creative horizons:** by developing the methods we use to tell our stories and representing a greater diversity of voices on stage.
- h. **Provide space to grow:** by working with national partners to create new environments for D/deaf and disabled artists to thrive and build independence.

## **What you might like to know as a prospective Board member**

Graeae is established as a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee. This means we are set up as a non-profit organisation that is intended to deliver what we regard as an important vision and mission.

In appointing a new Board member we are looking for someone who is prepared to make the commitment to the Company, is willing to learn as well as teach, and has some understanding of the challenges and opportunities Graeae faces. We may also be looking for a specific set of skills or experiences to ensure our Board can offer a broad range of insights, viewpoints, practices and support.

## **Composition of the Board**

Graeae's trustees are recruited for their specialist skills or knowledge and because they are representative of those with a stake or interest in the charity's work. Board members may also be recruited for their status, influence, contacts or public standing but this is not a primary concern.

## **What you can expect of us**

If you ask any Graeae Board members present or past they will all tell you that being a Board member is a stimulating, challenging and rewarding role. It offers the chance to work with a dedicated, committed, resourceful and professional group of people (staff team, Board and advisers) in an innovative and challenging environment. In becoming a Board member we will invite you to use your skills, experience and attitude to:

- Make a real difference to the future of theatre practice.
- Help develop meaningful opportunities for disabled performers and creative practitioners.
- Support the production of theatre which challenges perceptions and pushes boundaries.
- Actively engage with the strategic decisions and planning necessary to ensure Graeae thrives.

- Deepen understanding of the lives of people from a range of social backgrounds and cultures.

As a new Board member you will receive a thorough induction to the Company, ongoing training as appropriate and the support of your other Board members and the Graeae staff team.

### **What we will expect of you**

Board members are asked to commit to the following:

- Attendance at all Board meetings (4 times per year).
- Attendance at a minimum of 3 Graeae performances/events per year.
- Attendance at sub-committee meetings or working groups as appropriate (up to 4 times per year).
- Providing contacts who can help provide support, advice or funding.
- Attending stakeholder meetings or networking on behalf of Graeae.
- Being alert to opportunities that would further the Graeae vision and mission.
- Becoming familiar with Graeae's business and financial models, finances, budget, and financial/resource needs.
- Understanding our policies and procedures.
- Helping communicate and promote Graeae's mission and programmes to stakeholders, artists, and audiences.
- Supporting Graeae in a manner commensurate with your abilities and expertise.
- Act in the best interests of Graeae at all times.
- Declare any conflicts of interest as soon as reasonably practicable where these may arise, and withdraw from decision-making as appropriate.

Board members are also responsible for the selection, appointment and development of new Board members and as such are required to:

- Monitor the skills, knowledge and experience of the Board's membership.
- Ensure the Board has the competences and abilities to achieve its aims.
- Identify your own development and/or support needs and with the Company make arrangements for these to be met.
- Participate in training as required.

Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of the sector.

### **Board member recruitment policy and process**

Vacancies occur from time to time on the Graeae Board when Board members reach the end of their term or service or have to leave because of other commitments. When a vacancy is identified we:

1. Prepare an outline of the sorts of skills and experience we are looking for from a prospective Board member.
2. Undertake an open and accessible process to fill the vacancy including:
  - a. Making the vacancy known to as wide an audience as possible. This may also involve current Trustees or staff making the vacancy known to their contacts and seeking to get expressions of interest from suitable people
  - b. Appointing a recruitment panel for each Board member vacancy being advertised. The panel will assess an applicant's skills in relation to the role description, as well as their ability to meet minimum requirements of a Graeae Board member as outline in Appendices one and two.

- c. The interview panel will make recommendations to the Board after which successful applicants will be invited to attend two Board meetings as an observer. Appointments are then confirmed and made formal at the Annual General Meeting.

Graeae aims to ensure that no prospective Board member receives less favourable treatment on any of the grounds listed in its Equality and Diversity policy. Our recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and sufficiently diverse sectors of our communities are reached.

#### **TO APPLY**

We will need a CV and a covering letter, letting us know why you are interested in joining the Board and what skills and experience you could offer Graeae.

You can send it to [board@graeae.org](mailto:board@graeae.org) or by post to

Board Recruitment, Graeae Theatre Company, Bradbury Studios, 138 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DY

The deadline for applications is **5pm, 26 July 2019**

We hope to meet shortlisted applicants in the week commencing **26 August 2019**

# Appendix One: Role description

## Role Purpose

Under charity law Graeae Board members are Trustees of the charity and have ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of the Company, and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run and delivering the charitable outcomes for which it was established. In law, Trustees of Graeae have three particular duties – compliance, care and prudence – which are set out below. As Graeae is also a Company Limited by Guarantee Board members also act as Directors of Graeae for the purposes of Company Law.

## Principal responsibilities

### 1. Compliance

Trustees must ensure that Graeae complies with:

- Charity Law and the requirements of the Charity Commission
- The requirements, charitable purposes and objects of Graeae as defined in the charity's governing documents Company Law and the requirements of Companies House
- The requirements of other legislation and regulators governing the activities of Graeae

### 2. Duty of Care

Trustees must make sure they keep up to date with what Graeae is doing and should:

- Exercise reasonable care and skill, using personal knowledge and experience to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient.
- Ensure that they receive sound advice, assurance and useful and timely reports from the executive team.
- Ensure that they act with integrity, avoiding any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets.
- Be committed to the work of Graeae and be prepared to undertake activities on behalf of the Company.

### 3. Duty of prudence

Trustees must ensure that Graeae is and will remain solvent. They must:

- Keep informed of Graeae's activities and financial position.
- Ensure that charitable funds and assets are used wisely, and only to further the purposes and interests of the charity.
- Avoid undertaking activities that might place Graeae's property, funds or assets or reputation at undue risk.
- Establish and monitor appropriate audit arrangements to ensure Graeae is meeting its aims, objectives and goals.
- Appoint the Chief Executive (and other senior staff as required).
- Through the Chair, monitor the performance of the Chief Executive and Executive team, establishing clear delegation of operational and management arrangements as required.

In undertaking the above Board members will ensure a secure strategic direction for Graeae, including:

- Providing guidance to the executive on long term aims.
- Contributing actively to the Board's responsibility to give strategic direction to the organisation, through business planning, and by establishing a clear mission, values and long term objectives.
- Considering and approving strategic policies consistent with the business plan, legislation, mission, values and objectives.
- Considering and approving the Business Plan.
- Undertaking monitoring and evaluation as appropriate to ensure Graeae's aims are being met.

## **Conditions for Board members**

### **Length of service**

3 years, plus 1 further term (6 years in total) is the maximum standard length of service for all Board members.

### **Expenses**

All reasonable expenses of Board members incurred in the course of your duties as a Board member will be reimbursed by Graeae on receipt of an evidenced claim and in accordance with Graeae's expenses policy.

## **Appendix two: Person Specification**

### **Essential criteria**

#### Personal Qualities

- An understanding of, and commitment to, disabled-led theatre.
- A commitment to act solely in the best interests of Graeae.
- Strategic vision and the ability to focus on practical issues.
- Personal experience of diversity and equality issues.
- Fairness, independence of mind, integrity, wisdom and good judgment.
- Readiness to take, and be accountable for, decisions.
- Self-aware and self-managing.
- An effective team member.
- No significant conflicts of interest.
- The necessary time available to be an effective Board member.

### **Core competencies**

- Analytical skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively.
- Communication skills.
- Ability to challenge positively.
- Ability to be creative and logical.
- Ability to interpret diverse information.
- Ability to act as an ambassador for Graeae.

### **Experience Required in at least one of these areas**

- Experience of financial and risk management.
- Experience of the disability arts or wider disability sector.
- Direct personal experience of disability, diversity or equality issues.
- Knowledge of charity or employment legislation
- Knowledge and experience of formal or informal education settings
- Experience of Board, committee or senior team level decision making.
- Experience of governance in either the private, public or non-profit sectors.

### **Desirable criteria**

#### Knowledge and skills of:

- Disability, diversity or equality issues.
- Arts practice.
- PR and marketing.
- Employment law or Charity Legislation.
- Business, finance and governance.
- Non-profit sector.

### **General requirements**

- Provision of artistic programmes.
- Business and strategic planning.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- IT and business processes.