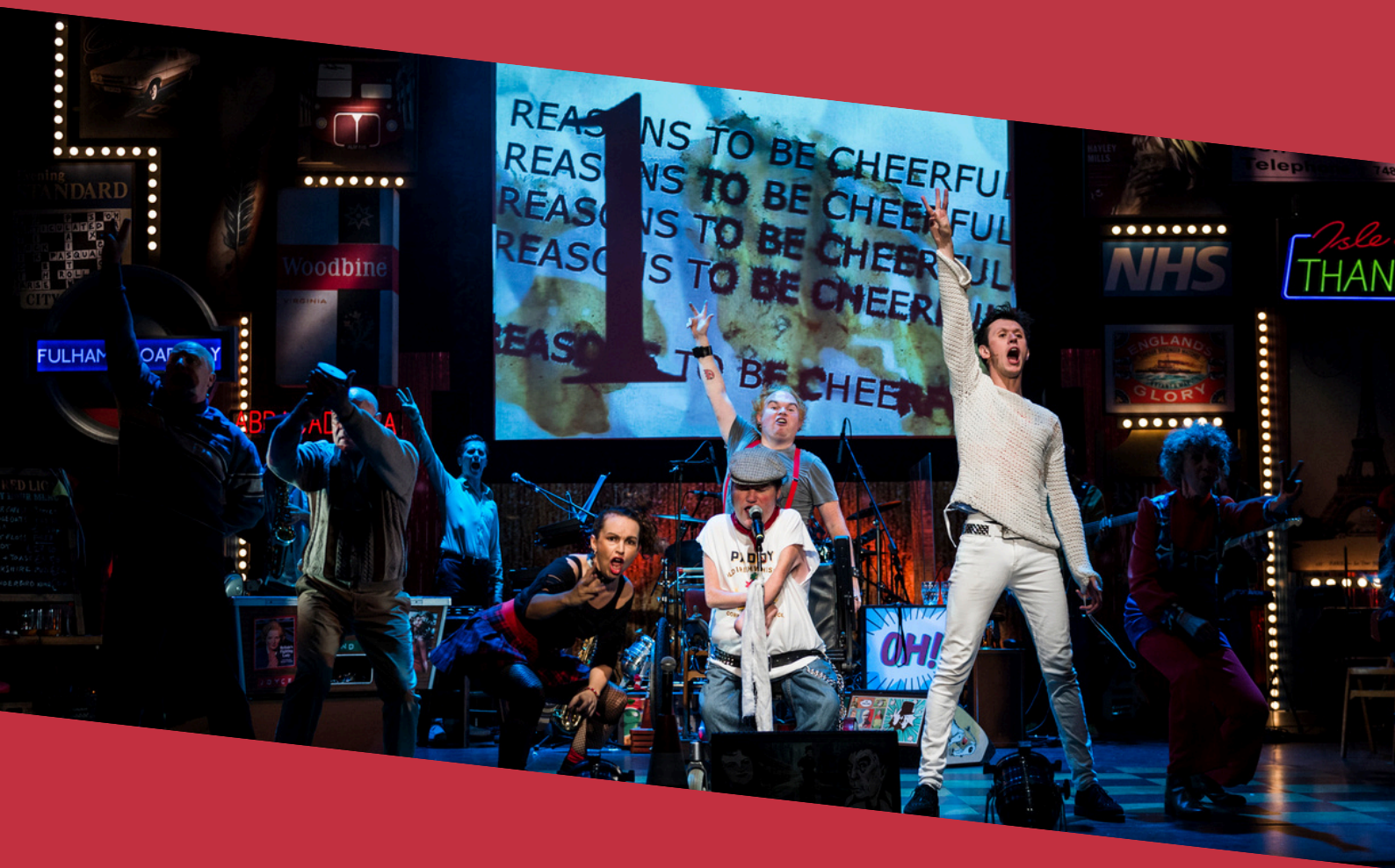


GRAEAE

THEATRE COMPANY



**Information for prospective
Graeae Board members**

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of the Board of Trustees for Graeae Theatre company and for considering joining the company.

I've been a Trustee for Graeae for nine years and have been Chair for three of these so it is now my time to hand the baton on to someone else to lead the charity into its next exciting phase of work.

Graeae has been a huge part of my professional life; starting back when I discovered Disability Arts in University as an undergraduate, I found a place that celebrated disability and access with joy and creativity. I was fortunate enough to work with the company after graduating from University to work on the Whiter Than Snow workshop tour. This connection to their work enabled me to really appreciate the impact of the art that they produce during my time on the Board.

Fast forward to joining the Board nine years ago and I have come to understand the deep and important impact Graeae has on the representation of Deaf and Disabled people in the Creative Industries. Securing and enabling its continued future through creativity is the prime focus for the next period for Graeae and its Board.

As the new Chair you will be joining during an exciting time for the charity as we continue to put into action the plan to create a national theatre for Disabled people, a programme that truly represents the broad diversity of the Disabled community.

You will be leading the company through some change as we secure the changes with the building and supercharge our national artistic programme.

If you are passionate about Disability Rights, supporting Disabled People through creativity and storytelling and ensuring the success of a nationally and internationally recognised theatre company at the centre of creating change for Disabled People, then come join us at Graeae.

Sam Tatlow,
Chair of the Board

Who we are

Graeae: A force for change in world-class theatre

Vision

To create world-class accessible theatre, breaking down barriers and challenging preconceptions by placing Deaf, Disabled and neurodivergent 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 Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists, locally, nationally and internationally, through the creation of trail-blazing theatre.

Values

Graeae is a disabled-led human rights company, founded on the need to tackle social injustice, discrimination and exclusion. It is fuelled by the pursuit of inclusion, access and artistic excellence and champions Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people in the creative industry.

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.



Artistically led by Jenny Sealey OBE, 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, Dame Emma Thompson DBE and Jack Thorne FRSL.





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 into the future

Graeae's 2023-26 national strategy opens up the cultural landscape for disabled artists, participants and audiences countrywide.

We have a battalion of allied arts venues and training partners working with us to dismantle the barriers faced by independent artists by building connections with theatres, arts organisations and training providers, establishing the next generation of arts leaders.

Our accessible London HQ remains a vital resource for our artists but we are aware of imminent rental increases.



Disabled artists, throughout their journey, will have the opportunity to ignite, connect and hone their craft - in London (particularly in Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forrest) and in the North West of England.

Working with partners such as Shakespeare North Playhouse, Liverpool Everyman, Action Transport Theatre and 20 Stories High, we will start to build opportunities at every stage of an artists' development.





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

Find new audiences: 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.

Champion accessibility: partnerships with national and international organisations creating, supporting and advising on accessible environments and practice.

Nurture talent: work with national partners to open up the arts for disabled artists at all experience levels. Create new environments for theatre-makers to thrive and build independence.

Promote excellent governance and leadership across the company, the theatre sector and other businesses. Open up routes to leadership roles.

Explore new creative horizons: by scrutinising our practice and exploring new processes and by representing a greater diversity of voices on stage.



What you might like to know as a prospective Chair of the Board

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 Chair, we are looking for a Deaf or Disabled person 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 acknowledge that there are different routes through to leadership roles for Deaf and Disabled people and that Board Membership may not have been accessible or on offer to some applicants in the past.

As Chair, you will have experience of governance or leadership in some form – we are flexible to how this is defined. No qualifications are required.

However, if you are interested in joining the Board and don't think you have the experience necessary to be Chair, we would still like to hear from you as there are other Board Member roles available.

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 (normally 4 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.

If you would like access support in completing your application, you can request this through our Access Manager, Vicky Berry at vicky@graeae.org

You can send your application to our Executive Director, Kevin Walsh, at kevin@graeae.org or by post to:

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

The deadline for applications is 18 October, 2024.

We hope to meet shortlisted applicants in the week commencing 11 November, 2024.

Appendix One:

Role description

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.

Additional Responsibilities as Chair:

To provide leadership and direction to the Board of Trustees, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity. Developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines. The Chair will lead Board Meetings, monitor the performance of the Chief Executive and Executive team, establishing clear delegation of operational and management arrangements as required.

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

- 4 years experience as a trustee or in a senior leadership role
- Experience in leading strategic change
- An understanding of, and commitment to, disabled-led theatre.
- A commitment to act solely in the best interests of Graeae.
- Personal experience of diversity and equality issues.
- Fairness, independence of mind, integrity, wisdom and good judgment.
- Readiness to take, and be accountable for, decisions.
- An effective team member.
- No significant conflicts of interest.
- The necessary time available to be an effective Board member
- Identify as Deaf or disabled

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 HR and people management
- Experience of Board, committee or senior team level decision making.
- Experience of governance in either the private, public or non-profit sectors.

Desirable criteria (one or more of the below)

Knowledge and skills of:

- Financial management
- Governance and Board experience
- Disability, diversity or equality issues.

Arts practice.

- PR and marketing
- Employment law or Charity Legislation.
- Non-profit sector.

General requirements

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



GRAEae

THEATRE COMPANY

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138 Kingsland Road London, E2 8DY**

**Artistic Director/Joint CEO: Jenny Sealey OBE
Executive Director/Joint CEO: Kevin Walsh**

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