

GRAEAE

THEATRE COMPANY

We create radical theatre, placing access at the heart of our work.



**Information for prospective
Graeae Board members**

Deadline: Friday 12 June

Welcome from the Chair

Thanks for your interest in joining the Board of Trustees at Graeae Theatre Company.

When I interviewed for the role of chair (only last year) I was asked what kind of culture I think is best for a board, and I said a culture of curiosity. It is not the board's job to operationally manage the charity, but it is our job to get curious about how we create the conditions for the whole team to do their best work. Curiosity is a transformative force, it is the foundation of how we are driven to imagine things differently. In reading this far, you have already shown that spirit of curiosity, so you should probably keep reading.

The experience of being a trustee at Graeae is probably best-described as an adventure.

Like an adventure, it is exciting. As trustees we often go beyond the accounts and board papers, and go to see shows where they're being performed around the country. It's important that trustees directly encounter the art and values of the company, as well as getting that information from reports and spreadsheets. It doesn't matter if you haven't seen a Graeae show before, if you join the board then invites will be coming your way to watch shows, visit young company performances, and to contribute expertise to campaigning activity.

It involves risk and uncertainty. As a board I would hope we are careful and diligent, but we do that in order to make sure we can take risks and allow for uncertainty. The work that Graeae does isn't straight forward, we are often pushing against the boundaries of what is possible or acceptable. But, it is this sense of ambition that makes being a trustee with Graeae really exciting.

You will be taken outside of your comfort zone. None of us know everything, and thankfully none of us need to. Collaboratively, we support each other to find the tools to support our community in new and better ways. Being a trustee at Graeae does support the charity, but I hope it will also support your development and experience.

If this sounds like the kind of adventure you want to go on, then please get in touch with us, you are the person we have been waiting to hear from.

Tom Ryalls

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.



I don't care if it
damages future
prospects.

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 to the future

Graeae's 2026-28 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.

The strategy will deepen our engagement with our community by delivering a lush, intersectional, disabled-led tapestry of art and culture and bold, radical, creatively-stimulating theatre.



The collaboration with trusted partners nationally, particularly on projects such as The Wedding Fair (Derby Theatre) and 12 Letters to My Name (Sheffield Theatres) is focussed on delivering a cohesive pathway to culture for disabled people as artists, participants and audiences.

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 Forest) and across the UK.





The strategy comprises six strategic aims. These are:

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 Board member

Graeae is a Registered Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee.

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

We are looking for Board Members of all experience levels and hope to recruit 3-4 new Board Members through this recruitment round.

In this recruitment round we are particularly seeking applicants with experience in one of the below:

- Financial management
- Legal
- Producing (commercial and subsidised sectors)
- Business planning and management
- Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Delivering digital projects
- Fundraising
- HR

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

Being a Graeae Board Member can be stimulating, challenging and rewarding. 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.

You can apply in writing. Please use between 500 and 1000 words.

You can apply with an audio recording or a video. Please make this recording or video between 3 and 6 minutes long.

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

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 12 June 2026,
6pm.**

**We hope to meet shortlisted applicants in the
week commencing 6 July 2026**

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.

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

- 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, Disabled or neurodivergent

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

- Financial management
- Legal
- Producing (commercial and subsidised sectors)
- Business planning and management
- Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Delivering digital projects
- Fundraising
- HR

Desirable criteria (one or more of the below)

Knowledge and skills of:

- Governance and Board experience
- Disability, diversity or equality issues
- Arts practice
- PR and marketing
- Non-profit sector.

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

T H E A T R E C O M P A N Y

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