

firebird theatre

Firebird Trustee Application Pack

"Firebird has been right at the heart of this theatre for many years. They're an extraordinary ensemble whose bold productions resonate far and wide. Firebird tell big stories that matter to everyone." Emma Stenning, Executive Director, Bristol Old Vic

"a gorgeous piece of theatre that implicitly argues for the existence and potential of theatre, along with continued, active expressions of compassion for all members of society...theatre Theresa May should be watching" – Exeunt, on 'A Spark and a Beating Heart'

"[Firebird] live with such intensity and concentration on stage, truly re-defining the term "living theatre". They must be supported in the richness they give." – Kathryn Hunter

About us

Firebird Theatre is a company of experienced disabled actors/performers. We have a consistent track record and history of making plays and performances since 1988.

We see ourselves as a family of actors with a job to do, to use our style of theatre – music, devised work, text and a large ensemble of actors – to make plays and tell stories to others, our audience. Connecting with other people is our motivation.

- We make and perform theatre
- We plan and deliver workshops to a range of different groups and organisations, particularly schools and colleges
- We support other disabled people to make theatre
- We develop the individual and group skills of the company (actors, workers, trustees) so that we can grow and move forward as a company

Our success lies in our dedication and professionalism. Being a member of Firebird improves our lives and in turn we can help other people.

Over the years, Firebird has changed, developed and grown. We started off as the Portway Players, named after the Social Services Resource and Activities Centre where we all met back in 1985; six of the original group are still working with Firebird. Becoming an independent theatre company in 2006 was really important for us. Working at Bristol Old Vic and becoming an Associate Company was a turning point in our development; it made us more professional and enabled us to link up, work and collaborate with other theatre practitioners.

We have a strong reputation with audiences and the industry. We are supported by MAYK, who have produced the Company's past two shows. Olivier Award winner Kathryn Hunter is our patron.

Our vision for the future

We want Firebird to have a future. The younger generation are ready to move forward and make Firebird something that has the potential for another 25 years! The Company are central to creating the plan for our future and want to be involved in every aspect of development.

1. We want to change people's perceptions of disabled people. In the past not many people had the chance to meet disabled people with learning difficulties; even now it does not happen much. People can see us, watch our plays. Our plays and workshops make people think about us and our lives, our experiences, what's happened to us in the past. We hope it will help make more understanding between us all. People will get the chance to know us and we hope they will change any wrong ideas they might have about us.

2. We want to challenge and work with mainstream theatre to promote theatre made by disabled people. If only the same small number of people get the chance to make theatre, it will remain irrelevant to a large number of people. The theatre industry needs us but doesn't always know how to work with us. We are leaders in this field.

3. We want to work towards inclusive and open communities by involving other disabled people. We believe people should work together. This is our vision for the world. We can learn from each other and help people learn from us. We believe in equality.

We are currently developing the company to help us meet this vision by:

1. Working in partnership with producers and other artists and organisations.
2. Strengthening the company through action research and organisational development.
3. Making and touring more great theatre, and connecting with more audiences.
4. Giving back to children and young people through workshops and schools partnerships.

Why join us?

Becoming a Trustee on Firebird Theatre's Board will offer you the opportunity to become part of the Firebird family and use your skills and experience to help us on this exciting journey.

Whether it's about giving something back, feeding an interest in theatre or developing new or existing skills, being part of Firebird's board is hugely rewarding. Our Trustees all have a high level of personal satisfaction from working with Firebird, and we hope you would too.

This is an important time for the company. Diversity is at the heart of creativity, but the equality gap is growing and it is becoming harder for disabled artists to make work. We want to develop the future of Firebird, and also influence the sector so more disabled artists can make theatre. Your support could help make this happen.

Role of Trustee

The primary role of a Trustee is to help secure the future of the charity by managing its resources responsibly, and ensure it complies with its governing document (our Memorandum and Articles of Association) and the law.

Our Trustees help deliver the vision of the Company and make sure that Firebird Theatre stays true to its aims. They offer practical advice and guidance, advocate for the Company and represent it at events and shows.

Trustees must be able to attend Board meetings, and other meetings or reviews as may be necessary (virtually or in person). Board meetings are normally held four times a year in Bristol. Board members each have a specific area of responsibility which they will need to give additional time to outside of meetings (approx. 2 hours per month.) They will also be expected to read Board papers and support the team where necessary.

How we would like to work with our trustees – created by the Company

- We want us to work as a team and share the Firebird way of working, which is about supporting each other and working together.
- We would like our trustees to support us and to work with us to be an organisation that is led by us, the artists.
- We would like trustees to be able to share and support our plans.
- We would like trustees to do as much as they can of the business-side of Firebird Theatre.
- We would like our trustees to help us get the money we need to do our work and help make sure we have somewhere to work.
- We would like trustees to help us with problems like transport, although we know it is not easy. We would like help when we need it from trustees.
- We are pleased to say that we know all our trustees by name. We always want to know who our trustees are, we want them to meet with us, talk to us and get to know us before they become a trustee. It is important we know their names and know who they are. We must be part of voting them onto the Board, too (that is clear in our Memorandum and Articles of Association).
- A trustee should be someone with the knowledge to make sure that Firebird Theatre is doing all it needs to do legally.
- The trustees need to trust the artists to get on with their jobs and the artists need to trust the trustees to get on with their jobs.
- It is important that we know that we all do different jobs, the business-side and the legal-side for a trustee, the artistic side for the artist.
- We know that trustees put a lot of their own time into Firebird Theatre, the meetings are not all of it and they need to do work when they are on their own too, in-between meetings. That is part of what trustees do.
- With trustees, especially new trustees, we need to ask what skills they can bring to Firebird Theatre, what help can they give us with our plan.

What we're looking for

Our board is well represented with members with a background in theatre operations, although experience of and passion for theatre is always welcome. We would particularly like to hear from people with experience in the following areas:

- Charity law
- Strategic development and fundraising
- Communications / IT
- Disability support, including current knowledge about government support

We hope that one of our new Trustees will be interested in taking on the role of Company Secretary.

Experience of:

- Acting as an advocate, which you could apply to Firebird's potential partners, donors, sponsors and supporters.
- Building good relationships with people at a range of different levels.
- Holding senior responsibility as part of a team in a charitable, non-profit, public sector or commercial organisation.
- Supporting people to achieve their goals.
- Thinking critically and independently to help translate strategy into plans or projects.

Knowledge, skills and values

- Identify with and commit to the vision and values of Firebird Theatre.
- Be able to relate to the Company members.
- Commitment to fairness, diversity, equality and inclusion.
- Be willing and able to speak your mind and contribute to Firebird Theatre in an active and positive manner.
- A critical eye to help ensure that the organisation complies with its governing documents, company law and other relevant legislation and regulations.

Current Firebird Theatre Trustees

- Mel Scaffold – Chair (CEO, Theatre Bristol)
- Jude McGreevy – Treasurer (independent)
- Jane Edwards-Reynolds (Theatre Administrator, Bristol Old Vic)
- Antigoni Messaritaki (Publisher, IOP Publishing, Institute of Physics)
- Jo Cuthbert (Occupational Therapist)
- Brian Davis (Company member representative)

Firebird actively encourages applications from those with less visibility in arts leadership. We specifically welcome applicants from people with disabilities and those from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and international backgrounds.

We look forward to receiving your application and thank you for your interest in the role.

Key Dates

Application deadline: **Friday 3rd November, 12 noon.**

Prospective Trustees may be invited to observe the next Firebird board meeting which takes place on **Thursday 9th November 6-8pm**, and to meet the Company during one of their sessions on **13th or 20th November** at some point between 11.15am and 3.45pm.

How to Apply

Please apply with your CV and a letter (no more than 2 pages) outlining:

Why you are interested in the role of Trustee with Firebird Theatre. Details of your skills, interests, personal attributes and past experience relevant to the role.

All applications should be marked: APPLICATION FOR TRUSTEE and emailed to mel@theatrebristol.net

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a conversation with a current Board member, and will then meet the Company during a session. All Trustees are subject to Company approval.

The posts are unpaid but all members can make claims for travel and subsistence incurred on Firebird Theatre business.

For more information on Firebird Theatre please visit www.firebird-theatre.com or email mel@theatrebristol.net