

# THEATRE BRISTOL

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## COME AND PLAY

### A PLAN FOR 2018-2022

#### Theatre Bristol Plan 2018-2022

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## VISION AND INVITATION

**Theatre Bristol is a laboratory combining collective action to create the future of theatre with open, generous, grassroots support.** We create the conditions to make great art with as wide and diverse a community as possible.

Over the next 10 years we want to see a fundamental shift in how people understand and value the role of art and artists in society, making them central to people's lives and the places they live. To achieve this vision, we need to ensure a wider range of people value, participate in and make a living from brilliant art. This is the context and driver for all our work.

We can only do this through collaboration, conversation and cross-fertilisation. If our plans spark your interest, get in touch and tell us how you would like to be part of them.

## MISSION

Theatre Bristol designs and tests new ideas that we believe have the potential to make large-scale change, creating new collaborative initiatives inside and outside the sector that build on the trust, value and knowledge generated by our expert support service.

We up theatre's game.

We champion the independent arts sector, the artists, producers and micro organisations on whom our creative ecology depends, and give them collective agency and representation. We provide bespoke, targeted support that demonstrates our care and fierce commitment to artists and their work.

We are well renowned for our artist support, expertise, and role in creating Bristol's reputation for world-class theatre and its strong independent theatre scene.

The relationship between artist support and the bigger picture is what makes Theatre Bristol work. We collaborate with people to challenge conventional thinking and road test progressive practice, then share what really works – as well as what is still difficult, confusing and complex.

**By combining this grassroots support with collective action we help create a connected, confident and ambitious sector.**

We are rooted in Bristol, helping to make it the best place for anyone to make and experience live performance, and contributing to the city's reputation for exciting culture and counter-culture. Our outlook and ambition is international, constantly seeking to connect beyond existing audiences and relationships and ensure a healthy, varied flow of ideas and experience in and out of the city.

We are committed to increasing our reach and relevance, developing new relationships in other sectors and locations that will help drive forward the future of the arts, and generate exciting opportunities for artists in Bristol and beyond.

## VALUES

Our work is guided by 10 ethos statements. They have the ring of common sense, but remain radical provocations:

- When you share knowledge, everyone gets better.
- Be personal. It takes time, but it makes for the best relationship.
- It is essential to hold a space for uncertainty and for imagining alternative possibilities.
- Be honest about subjectivity: subjectivity is valuable because it leads you to what you care most about.
- We must cultivate a diverse pool of decision-makers so that there is more than one subjectivity at play.
- Good ideas come from unexpected places.
- Be alive to inspiration.
- The artists own the work.
- Art makes the world a better place.
- Be committed to the long term – on behalf of ourselves and those we work with.

As an organisation Theatre Bristol thinks like an artist and works like a producer, inhabiting the space between the radical fringe and the wider world, co-designing, developing and translating new ideas into sustainable practice. We encourage the messiness and risk that real innovation requires - as Bill Sharpe (International Futures Forum) says, '*configuring the chaotic abundance of meaning*'.

## THEATRE BRISTOL IN 2018

Since 2005 we have been using ecological thinking to innovate and improve the way theatre and the performing arts are made, connecting the individual to the wider context at all stages. We have always placed artists at the centre of this work.

As a result, Bristol has a national reputation for world-class theatre, with a strong independent spirit. We've worked hard to create a healthy, generous habitat, where people share ideas, knowledge and resources.

We are now core to Bristol's theatre infrastructure, and have progressed from the precarity of project funding, becoming a Bristol City Council Key Arts Provider, then a Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in 2012. This has helped us plan and test longer-term initiatives, but we don't take it for granted: we must continue to be useful and relevant. This means constantly seeking new people to engage with and champion, and thinking realistically about our sustainability will keep us on the right track.

We are recognised as sector leaders in artist support, development and leadership and regularly lead or contribute to research and debate in this area, most recently for Arts Council Wales, the Universities of Glasgow and Birmingham, Strike a Light and LAMDA.

We try to stay flexible and fleet-of-foot, responding to the needs and priorities we identify with the sector. That's why in 2016-17 we restructured our Executive Team and artist support structure to be more outward-facing, and to visibly position artists as leaders. We now have a permanent team of four, and three practising artists working with us part time as Artist Support Associates, sharing their expertise while continuing to make their own work. We regularly work with brilliant freelance producers, artists and consultants as we develop new projects and research.

## CONTEXT

*"The city is a worthy winner thanks to its ideal combination of extraordinary culture, impressive schools, buzzing culinary scene, exciting redevelopment and community spirit...We sum the city up as cool, classy and supremely creative." - Sunday Times on naming Bristol 'Best place to live in Britain 2017'*

Culture is foundational to Bristol's national and international reputation. Theatre's role and profile has changed massively over the past 13 years, and is now characterised by the combination of a vibrant and varied independent scene, festivals like Circus City, Mayfest, In Between Time and Puppet Festival showcasing the best national and international performance in many forms, and venues such as Bristol Old Vic, Tobacco Factory Theatres, Circomedia and Trinity Arts Centre commissioning and presenting world class work. The city's newest NPOs reflect an important focus on independence, difference and community, with theatre company Action Hero, integrated circus company Extraordinary Bodies and the British Paraorchestra now receiving regular funding, as well as Globe Theatre director Emma Rice's new Bristol-based company Wise Children.

Bristol arts are increasingly interdisciplinary, with Watershed fostering collaboration between theatre artists and experts in creative technology, and We The Curious (formerly @Bristol) committed to removing the boundaries between science and art. Artist collectives Residence and Interval, artist-run venue The Wardrobe Theatre, and Knowle West Media Centre's arts-led community activism show there is potential for alternative ways of working to flourish. Independent artists and Bristol venues successfully tour work internationally, contributing to the city's reputation and creating new connections with other artists and audiences around the world.

We must keep working hard to ensure these strengths continue to manifest and theatre doesn't stagnate, so it's important understand the forces and opportunities that have made this possible, and how those are changing over the next few years.

As we set out on the next stage of our development, we are all facing a new set of challenges locally and globally, including growing inequality, austerity, climate change and Brexit. We won't pretend we – or theatre – can fix them. But they have influenced this plan, and we will continue to adapt and respond to this changing environment. We want to clearly acknowledge the barriers people are facing, the risks and challenges as well as opportunities, and to state our belief that art and artists must be an integral part of a better future.

Locally this includes addressing the infrastructural challenges of rising living costs for artists, poor transport links, pressure on local authority budgets and lack of capital investment in performance spaces. Only through bold imagination and collective working can we create new solutions that not only build on Bristol's international reputation, but enable a much wider range of its citizens to lead, make and take part in the arts.

## KEY RESULT AREAS 2018-2022

While we continue in our mission to up theatre's game and help it think ahead, over the next four years we have four key areas of focus. They describe where we are specifically seeking to build value. They respond to what is happening right now and help us and others prepare for the future. They combine to improve the sector and increase our impact and usefulness. By connecting more widely and growing our family we will extend our relevance, reach and resilience, strengthening our mandate to represent the sector and enabling us to benefit more people.

### KRA A

Increasing TB's openness, accessibility and relevance to a wider range of people.

### KRA B

Generating more opportunities for artists and connecting them with people's daily lives through new collaborations and partnerships.

### KRA C

Improving TB's visibility and profile as innovators, providers of a high quality, accessible service and champions of the independent sector.

### KRA D

Building a more resilient organisation in an ethical way.

## OBJECTIVES

### ONE (KRAs B, D)

Cultivating a connected, diverse sector that participates in its own support by incubating peer support networks and developing opportunities to promote artists as leaders.

### TWO (KRAs A, D)

Enabling more people to make art and make a living from art by increasing the range of people who lead and benefit from our artist support service.

### THREE (KRAs A, C, D)

Upping ambition by creating better, more accessible platforms and opportunities for critical discourse/conversation that champion multiple perspectives.

### FOUR (KRAs A, B, D)

Creating the potential for large-scale change by developing collective research and action with a wider range of partners in different sectors and places.

### FIVE (KRAs C, D)

Becoming a stronger force for positive change by promoting our model and learning more widely and provoking conversations – even (especially) when they're difficult.

### SIX (KRA D)

Securing the future of TB in a way that generates more value than it consumes, through ethical management and innovative business development.

All our objectives help deliver KRA D - only by strengthening the sector can we strengthen TB.

## **OBJECTIVE ONE (KRAs B, D)**

**Cultivating a connected, diverse sector that participates in its own support by incubating peer support networks and developing opportunities to promote artists as leaders.**

We will act as a mechanism for (re)distributing power, resource and opportunity by facilitating network culture and modeling and promoting alternatives to top down leadership.

### **We will do this through:**

1. Artist support and open events - convening and connecting people to spark collaboration, peer support and innovation in person and online - with a particular focus on extending the invitation to people who don't already have the confidence or connections to find us.
2. The Bristol DIY Culture Network - a 'think and do tank' for Bristol culture, TB will coordinate the network in 2018, making sure it is more open, accessible and representative of the city. We will create a structure that results in unexpected connections and collaborations, and leads to direct action.
3. Bristol Theatre Parents Network - a collaborative project with Travelling Light, it will help parents to make and access theatre by developing a peer support community, and influencing how the sector works with parents.
4. Other networks - we will continue to bring people together around specific themes or areas of need e.g. our annual 'Bristol Artists in Edinburgh' initiative that aims to help artists share resources, communication and support.
5. TB Agents - increasing the visibility of expertise in the community by enabling independents to attend conferences and events often only accessible to salaried staff. From 2018 we will grow this programme, developing the expertise and profile of a wider range of artists in national and international spaces.
6. Leader development - through mentored associate producer placements and nurturing individuals with outstanding potential as we have done with the Circus City Co-directors, we will give more people an inside line in the industry, providing both support and a platform to raise their profile.
7. Artists as leaders in Theatre Bristol - our Artist Support Associates and Director of Research post have transformed how we think about artists as leaders and how artists think about leadership. We will create new opportunities to put this into practice by employing more artists in leadership roles.

## **OBJECTIVE TWO (KRAs A, D)**

### **Enabling more people to make art and make a living from art by increasing the range of people who lead and benefit from our artist support service.**

It is vital for the healthy future of art and society that a much wider range of people see themselves represented at all levels of theatremaking, from leadership roles to the art they experience. We want to ensure people from any background can value, participate in and making a living from brilliant art.

#### **We will do this through:**

1. Diversifying Artist Support Associates - ensuring that our ASAs represent a wider range of practice, experience and background, giving different people the opportunity to lead and making the service relevant and resonant for more artists we're not currently connecting with. This specifically includes more BAME artists and people who are D/deaf, neurodiverse or disabled, as well as a greater diversity of art form practices.
2. Research and analysis - gaining detailed understanding of who we do and don't connect with, and making sure we know what people need and are best placed to offer support before engaging with them. This includes working in partnership with a University of Bristol researcher to understand the role of Theatre Bristol in the local cultural ecology as perceived by makers and audiences.
3. Artist 'surgery day' partnerships - actively seeking and supporting people who are underrepresented in the community of theatremakers by hosting events in partnership with organisations who have strong relationships with people who don't currently access our support, including Acta, Trinity Centre, KWMC and Ujima.
4. Disability and neurodiversity training and development - providing in depth support for disabled artists and making our language, resources and support more accessible and relevant to people who are visually impaired, D/deaf, neurodiverse and disabled. We will provide Firebird with one year of free financial management, generating learning and helping secure the future of their company. We will undertake training for staff around increased awareness and practical steps to make our service more accessible, and work in collaboration with organisations like Social Skills Agency to co-develop training for the sector.

### **OBJECTIVE THREE (KRAs A, C, D)**

#### **Upping ambition by creating better, more accessible platforms and opportunities for critical discourse/conversation that champion multiple perspectives.**

We create platforms for conversation and critical dialogue that elevate practice, encourage collaboration and enable the sharing of learning.

#### **We will do this through:**

1. Redevelopment of theatrebristol.net - an extension of our staff team and the first port of call for people wanting to connect to Bristol's theatre scene, we will make this vital resource more stable, accessible and better at enabling critical conversation. Phase one will secure the site, replacing old infrastructure with something more futureproof and adaptable. Phase two will respond to user feedback, incorporating tools or structures that support development around membership and private giving.
2. Open Space and Creative Gathering - from day one Open Space Technology has been fundamental to how Theatre Bristol hosts conversation, identifies pressing sector issues and incubates action. We will reenergise these gatherings, welcoming new people into the room and creating more opportunities to move from thinking to doing. This will happen through better invitations, improved access, new co-hosting partnerships and different facilitation methodologies.
3. TB Handbook (Working Title) - created in collaboration with the theatre community, this 'handbook' with online, physical and live iterations will share wisdom and insight into less visible elements of industry practice and problems. Prioritising different perspectives and honest, open conversation it will create a theatre sector more ready for the future. The championing of complexity, and of a range of voices and approaches, will help create a more diverse sector, and result in better work for audiences.

## **OBJECTIVE FOUR (KRAs A, B, D)**

### **Creating the potential for large-scale change by developing collective research and action with a wider range of partners in different sectors and places.**

The future of culture is collaborative. New solutions require multiple perspectives, strong, generous partnerships and shared resources. To make this possible we must think beyond current provision and build relationships with a wider range of people to keep the whole sector moving forwards.

#### **We will do this through:**

1. Finding new collaborators - through our new board members, CEO Maternity Cover and attendance at national and international events we will develop relationships with people beyond our current networks who bring something different and exciting to our knowledge exchange and development from its earliest stages.
2. Dance Futures and Bristol Dance Partnership - in 2017 we established the Dance Futures Steering Group to build on several years' dance development in Bristol. From 2018 we will host a Dance Futures Advocate to create Bristol Dance Partnership, and help the sector realise its potential in the region. They will have a strong focus on advocacy, partnership development, enabling collective working, and increasing investment in the sector.
3. Disability Arts Producers - we will work with a range of partners to support disabled artists and those working with them, improve training and routes into professional practice, and improve working conditions, aiming to make Bristol a centre of research and excellence for disabled artists. The initial collaborators are Watershed, Extraordinary Bodies, British Paraorchestra and Firebird, and we will extend this through twice-yearly gatherings that focus on long-term, in depth thinking and change.
4. Cultural Curriculum for Bristol – this collaboration explores and tests ways in which schools can work with artists and arts organisations in ways that have a demonstrably positive impact on children's learning and attainment. Our particular focus as leaders of the dance strand is how artists can lead this work at a strategic as well as delivery level. We will use this as a jumping off point for further investigations that bring in new and unexpected partners.

## **OBJECTIVE FIVE (KRAs C, D)**

**Becoming a stronger force for positive change by promoting our model and learning more widely and provoking conversations – even (especially) when they're difficult.**

Theatre Bristol provides ideas-led thinking and provocation, testing and demonstrating different ways of working to help create a confident and ambitious sector. To make sure this has more impact and influence we need to get better at sharing ideas and stirring up debate. We want to improve distribution of what we learn both from our collective research and action, and our approach to leadership.

### **We will do this through:**

1. Director of Research - this new role was established in 2017 to guide TB's vision and ensure our work has wider impact by:
  - Identifying research strands - enabling current practising artists to influence everything we do, elevating issues from our artist support to shape sector-wide thinking
  - Curating and promoting a wide range of voices alongside our own, encouraging dialogue and building community.
  - Sharing our thinking and learning through the channels below.
2. TB publication channels - we will increase profile of the ideas and learning coming out of TB by sharing regular 'in progress' articles and conversations through [theatrebristol.net](http://theatrebristol.net) and the new TB Handbook (working title).
3. External channels – through our new Director of Research role we will actively seek out and take up more external opportunities to promote TB's research and thinking nationally and internationally, including panel talks, consultations and publications.

## **OBJECTIVE SIX (KRAs D, B)**

**Securing the future of TB in a way that generates more value than it consumes, through diverse leadership, ethical management and innovative business development.**

Business development has increased our understanding of how we generate different types of value across the organisation, what areas have potential to grow, what should remain free and what can generate income. We will build on this to develop TB as a strong, ethical organisation.

### **We will do this through:**

1. Business development training and support - increase resources for development through participation in the SSE Resilience Programme, implementing professional development for staff and investing in consultancy.
2. Earned income: general management - a paid-for service that combines provision of expert financial/HR support with training for emerging arts administrators. This will make our service useful to more people, and improve resilience both of TB, as a new source of earned income, and of the sector as a whole, resulting in sound management infrastructures and a new generation of skilled general managers.
3. Private giving and membership - researching and developing a private giving and membership strategy, 'Pay It Forwards' campaign and related technology infrastructure.
4. Diversifying our board - recruitment of two new board members by end of 2018 that enhance the range of perspectives and backgrounds in our leadership team through a combination of solicited application and open call. Recruitment of two young people to our board - as full board members but with a fixed term commitments: one young (under 30) artist; one young person age 18-25.
5. Diversifying our staff - recruitment of Artist Support Associates and other roles in a way that ensures more employment of people who are currently underrepresented within our team, enabled by review of language and criteria to make roles accessible to more people, and broader and more targeted distribution of opportunities.
6. Safeguarding and managing assets - strengthening our infrastructure to protect our knowledge, relationships and data, and better use them for the benefit of TB and the sector. This includes GDPR compliance and securing theatrebristol.net for the future.

## 2019-2022 - OVERVIEW

Our KRAs and objectives set Theatre Bristol's path for the next four years, with a strong focus in 2018-19 on laying the groundwork that will enable us to achieve greater impact, usefulness, profile and resilience.

From 2019 our plans include:

- Targeting development of artist support to reach new people through a greater number of 'surgery days' with partners, better communication and accessibility in person and online.
- Improving quality of practice across the sector through training for artists around disability and neurodiversity in relation to their practice.
- Incubating at least one citywide network per year to facilitate collective agency, representation and action.
- Establishing TB Handbook (working title) as a leading resource for shared wisdom and critical conversation, including one publication and one live event
- Developing at least two major collective action initiatives that respond to the most urgent challenges facing the sector, in partnership with new collaborators
- Building on year one of Dance Futures, creating Bristol Dance Partnership to help achieve a collective vision and future for dance in Bristol.
- Growing TB's family and the ways in which we can support each other through roll out of membership scheme.

## PEOPLE

Board of Non-Executive Directors	Nick Sweeting - Chair Clare Reddington James Stenhouse Laila Diallo Sarah Dickenson	Meet 4 x year and provide support between meetings
CEO	Mel Scaffold (maternity leave in 2018)	Full time; permanent.
CEO (Maternity Cover)	Laura Drane	3 days p/w; fixed term Jan-Dec 2018. Additional executive support provided through freelance consultants
Director of Research	Tanuja Amarasuriya	3 days p/w average worked flexibly around artistic commitments; permanent.
Director of Business Development	Sarah Kingswell	3.5 days p/w; permanent.
Administrator	Miriam Battye	3 days p/w; permanent.
Artist Support Associates x 3	From April 2018 Karla Shacklock + 2 to be recruited	1 day p/w average worked flexibly around artistic commitments; fixed term 12-month contracts. Rolling recruitment to ensure there are always 3 ASAs in post.
Business Development Consultant	To be recruited in 2018	Terms tbc, fixed term freelance contract during Jan-Dec 2018.

Additionally we will work with a broad range of people through project specific roles, and use the opportunity of staff sabbaticals to commission new voices to contribute to our research.

## MONEY

In 2016-17 we worked with business incubator Upstarter to analyse the resource needed to deliver our initiatives in relation to the value (financial and otherwise) they generate for Theatre Bristol and the sector. This has increased our understanding of how what activity should remain free and what can generate income. We will work with a Business Development Consultant in 2018, as well as participating in the SSE resilience programme, and use this analysis to further diversify our income streams and reduce our reliance on public funding.

To date we have identified the following areas to build on over the next four years and have assigned income targets based on past experience and knowledge of demand.

- Business Development for other organisations – either one-off development, longer-term provision including training or on-going mentoring
- Research and partnership projects – around identified areas of collective need
- Other income generation e.g. facilitation, workshop delivery
- Consultancy as with our recent Arts Council Wales contract
- High-level executive producing – as with Circus City in 2015 & 2017, if alternative capacity cannot be identified in the city TB can provide experience and infrastructure.
- As yet we have not exploited our office space to generate income; we currently offer desks & meeting space for free, however this may be something we consider in the future

Research from the past 3 years means we will not prioritise

- Trusts & Foundations, unless as part of collective action.
- Charging for grassroots artist support: this is the heart of what we do and informs all our work.

With the redevelopment of theatrebristol.net and the private giving and membership strategy we plan to triple income from these sources by 2021-22.

Theatre Bristol is a Company Limited by Guarantee. With our board we regularly revisit this to decide if the costs and benefits of becoming a charity mean we should change our structure. Likewise we are currently not registered for VAT but take advice annually on whether we should do so.

We remain light on our feet with a small staff who are able to quickly respond to changes. We grow our staff when necessary to deliver projects but always flex back to our core team afterwards. We have minimal overheads and our workspace unites us and saves us time and money by bringing together the artists and producers we work with each year.

## APPENDICES

See attached documents for:

- NPO Responsibilities overview
- SMART objectives, including Creative Case for Diversity and Equality Action
- Risk and resilience strategy
- Budgets and cashflow