

# CHAIR OF BRISTOL OLD VIC

Recruitment Pack



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**







# SUMMARY

**Bristol Old Vic seeks a new Chair to succeed Dame Elizabeth Forgan.**

**Bristol Old Vic is the oldest continuously working theatre in the English-speaking world. The 254-year-old theatre is recognised nationally and internationally as one of the most exciting and inclusive places to experience world-class theatre.**

Called “*the loveliest theatre in the world*” by Peter O’Toole and “*the most beautiful theatre in England*” by Sir Daniel Day Lewis, Bristol Old Vic is also the beating heart of the South West of England – a warm and welcoming public building for all of Bristol to enjoy and a historic playhouse that aims to inspire audiences with its own original productions, both at home and on tour.

The Chair plays a crucial role in providing outstanding strategic leadership to our impressive board and executive team as we look to drive business performance, profitability and growth in line with our newly transformed business ambitions. They would help shape our ambitious five year strategy, while ensuring we continue to meet our legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.

An ambassador for Bristol Old Vic in sector, social and political circles, candidates will promote the organisation with a range of stakeholders, from audience, donors and local authorities to the regulator and other leaders.

Candidates will bring strong non-executive and ideally chairing experience, natural gravitas, and emotional intellect to the role.

The essential requirements of any applicant is a commitment to theatre and the arts. The role holder must share Bristol Old Vic’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and we would particularly like to hear from candidates whose professional and personal experience will bring new perspectives, understanding and capacity to the Board.

There are five main areas of priority which any incoming Chair of Bristol Old Vic should be aware of...

# 1. BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION



In March 2020 Bristol Old Vic was a viable, successful, financially sustainable business, engaging with our community and creating theatre with a global reputation. We'd interwoven artistic excellence, social impact and commercial success, entertained 570k people, grossed £11.6m in ticket sales and reopened our building following a successful £13m capital campaign. Hit shows transferred to London and toured internationally and by 31 March 2020 our commercial profit was £463k.

We now seek to invest in our future viability by transforming our business. We need to look at new strands of business and find new areas of sustainable growth.

We seek to create a new / live-streamed digital hybrid model. How do we ensure the commercial exploitation in what will be a crowded market place and how do we drive the narrative around the brand nationally and internationally?

In conjunction with this, how do we grow our commercial assets including events, workshop, merchandise and food and beverage so that they complement and support the artistic programme?

How do we effectively market ourselves in a market place which has seen traditional large businesses benefit the most?





## 2. THE COVID PANDEMIC

The impact on the work of Bristol Old Vic of the Covid pandemic was the immediate closure of the business on 16th March 2020. We re-opened on the 13th August with a scaled back artistic programme due to government social restrictions but unfortunately had to close again on the 2nd November and are yet to re-open. The organisation has experienced a decrease in turn-over for its April 2020-March 2021 financial year of c. £1.2m (£4m down to £2.8m). An application was made to the Arts Council's Culture Recovery Fund from which the organisation received £610,466. Securing more emergency funds will significantly enhance the prospects for the artistic programme in 21/22, yet the organisation still plans to continue producing and programming work, with a new hybrid live-stream model being developed as part of the organisation's commercial strategy moving forwards. The current budget for the 2021/22 financial has a turnover of c. £3m – a reduction of £1.1m on normal levels.



## 3. REPRESENTATION AND WELCOME

We have set up a working group for organisational change, reporting to the board, chaired by Chino Odimba. Its key focus is to generate a more dynamic and inclusive relationship between the venue and its communities, and will research diversity and representation across all areas of our business. Working with a consultant to deliver an action plan for Bristol Old Vic, and partnering with Watershed, Bristol Beacon, Arnolfini and St George's, it will contribute to a City-Wide Plan for Representation and Inclusivity in the Cultural Sector.



## 4. ARTS COUNCIL STRATEGY

Bristol Old Vic is funded by the Arts Council, a member of the National Portfolio, receiving c. £1,200,000 a year until March 2023. The Arts Council has just launched its new 10-year strategy 'Let's Create', which proposes a significant shift towards the provision of wider cultural opportunities for a far wider base of participants. What will be crucial within the Arts Council application is how we increase and communicate more widely the transformational work carried out by our Engagement Department, and further develop the relationship and interconnection between this and our headline programme.



## 5. SUSTAINABILITY

Addressing our environmental impact is an organisational priority for us and we're currently in the process of reviewing our strategy and targets to ensure we continue to reduce our impact to as low a level as possible.

In the meantime, a key focus for the coming year is to expand our sustainability work and develop some new measures to advance the cultural sector's environmental practice. We pursue Julie's Bicycle's 'Creative Green' process as a framework for improving practice in the organisation and would like to look at developing new and innovative ways to reduce the impact of theatre and its practice on the environment.

Above image: Kneehigh's *Dead Dog in a Suitcase* (and other love songs). Photograph by Steve Tanner



# MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure the Board of Trustees sets strategic business objectives in the short, medium and long term, which the Executive Director, Artistic Director and the management team will then enact.
- Ensure that there is a suitable Board of Trustees / Directors in place, which is representative of Bristol.
- Provide leadership and guidance around the necessary business transformation required in a very different environment.
- Provide leadership and direction to the Board of Trustees to ensure that it works well and fulfils its responsibilities of governance of the organisation.
- Promote the highest standards of governance and ensure the effective implementation of decisions of the Board of Trustees.
- Ensure that the organisation has appropriate artistic and executive leadership.
- As Chair of the Board of Trustees, assist the Executive Director and Artistic Director, providing support and advice and helping him/her to implement the policies and strategies whilst respecting executive responsibility.
- With the Board, monitor progress of the organisation in light of its objectives.
- Ensure there is timely and accurate financial reporting and that appropriate internal controls are in place.
- Offer leadership and support in ensuring the organisation reaches its annual fundraising targets, acting proactively to introduce new supporters to the wider network and encourage other board members to assist in this area.
- Optimise the relationship between the Board of Trustees, and management team by attending productions and away days whenever possible.
- Represent the organisation at public events.
- Liaise where necessary with the organisation's key stakeholders. This includes the Arts Council of England and Bristol City Council.
- Be fully aware of the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees to the Charity Commission and Companies House.



# EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL QUALITIES REQUIRED

## The Chair should be able to demonstrate:

- Experience of governance in a prior arts, charity or commercial sector.
- Experience of shaping and maintenance of the governance structure.
- An understanding of the role of the Chair in a not-for-profit organisation.
- An understanding of the difference between governance (the responsibility of the Chair) and executive management (the responsibility of the Executive Director and Artistic Director).
- Experience or understanding of how to chair complex meetings and in obtaining consensus.
- Experience and understanding of how management teams work.
- A charismatic style, with strong networking capabilities.
- Sound judgement and the capacity for strategic thinking.

# TIME COMMITMENT

- Individuals will need to demonstrate the willingness and commitment to meet the needs of this role, which is likely to require a commitment of c2 days a month.
- The Trust is in the process of reviewing its term of office, and it is likely that the Chair's initial term is for three years, with the option for one more consecutive term of three years.
- There are currently six Bristol Old Vic Trust board meetings each year. In addition the Chair is required to sit on the Finance & General Purposes and Remunerations and Nominations sub-committees. The frequency of Trust board meetings is under review.
- The Chair is invited to attend Bristol Old Vic events: press nights, fundraising events, and other meetings and/or events as appropriate. The Chair may also feel it appropriate to host private events in support of Bristol Old Vic, for example previews for corporate and individual supporters.
- Meetings are currently held on zoom but would normally be held at Bristol Old Vic.

# HOW TO APPLY

- A CV setting out your career history and including relevant details of any professional qualifications.
- A short supporting statement (maximum two sides A4) giving evidence of your ability to meet the essential criteria for the role. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the areas identified in the person specification.
- In addition, please also complete and return our Diversity & Equality Monitoring Form.

If you would like an informal, confidential chat regarding the position, please contact the Chair of our recruitment group, Claire Hiscott, at [clairehiscott@gmail.com](mailto:clairehiscott@gmail.com)





**THANK  
YOU**

