

## **Chair of the Board of Trustees: Candidate Brief**

### **Introduction**

Phoenix Dance Theatre is the UK's longest standing contemporary dance company outside London. Celebrated for its exciting productions and world class dancers, the Company embarks on national and international tours annually and is regularly invited to perform at global cultural events. The Company is renowned for inspiring the next generation of dance talent across the UK through award-winning education work.

Over the last 37 years from its home in Leeds, Phoenix Dance Theatre has grown to be one of Britain's leading contemporary dance companies and has played an important role in celebrating the heritage of its home city, promoting Leeds as a City of Dance, championing the Leeds 2023 international cultural festival, and showcasing the region globally as an exciting place to live, work, and invest.

The Company is on the cusp of an important new era, enjoying new and burgeoning partnerships with major businesses and partners. We now seek a new Chair of the Board with the vision, ambition and influence to make the most of these opportunities and help realise the Company's artistic vision.

### **History**

Established in Leeds in 1981 by three black British men, Phoenix Dance Theatre has grown to be a key northern forerunner in contemporary dance and for 37 years has performed across the globe educating and inspiring diverse audiences through dance. With its roots in the suburbs of Chapeltown and Harehills in Leeds, Phoenix Dance Theatre offers a northern voice for contemporary dance in Britain.

With the founders' enthusiasm for dance sparked by inspirational teacher Nadine Senior at Harehills Middle School, they created an opportunity for themselves to dance - and so Phoenix was born. Over the years the company has represented British dance at the Cultural Olympiad in Atlanta, performed to 52 heads of state at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh, received commissions from the BBC and in 2018 performed its landmark dance work *Windrush: Movement of the People* celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the first wave of Caribbean migrants to the UK.

### **The Company**

Phoenix Dance Theatre currently has a team of eight permanent professional dancers, runs a dancer apprenticeship programme and operates from a state-of-the-art dance building, offering opportunities for dancers, choreographers, musicians and young people to develop.

The current Artistic Director Sharon Watson has been repeatedly recognised for her service to dance and the city of Leeds including: Cultural Leadership programme's Woman to Watch 2010, Yorkshire Woman of the Year 2016, Yorkshire Woman of Achievement in Business 2016, was appointed Chair of the independent steering committee for the Leeds 2023 European Capital of Culture bid and awarded the English Woman's Award 2018 for Arts and Culture.

Phoenix Dance Theatre's productions and educational projects attract a culturally diverse audience by offering themes, dance styles and narratives that are relevant and representative of the multicultural communities of the UK.

Phoenix Dance Theatre's dancers are renowned for their athletic power and, with Sharon Watson as the creative leader, Phoenix is also able to attract some of the best choreographers and most thrilling dancers in the country and from overseas. In doing so Phoenix is one of the most valued arts organisations in the city of Leeds and a beacon of success outside of London - creating and performing

world class art across the globe.

**Our Reach:**

Phoenix performs to around 20,000 people annually and works with over 6,000 participants per year through its Access and Education department which serves to develop the new artists of the future, brings new audiences to dance and offers experiences and life skills that equip disadvantaged and vulnerable young people and adults to better respond to the challenges they face. Phoenix Dance Theatre's Access and Education projects include work with young carers, children with disabilities, dementia sufferers, school children, talented young people through the Phoenix Youth Academies and delivery of the dance GCSE syllabus on behalf of numerous schools.

Phoenix is prized by audiences and participants across the UK as a company that has grown from an unlikely and challenging environment into an internationally respected organisation. Surviving against the odds since 1981 the company has combatted economic decline, racial prejudice and cultural intolerance. Phoenix is itself the story of the Windrush generation and, whilst its staff and dancers now come from many backgrounds, the work is deeply underpinned by its rich cultural heritage.

*"Stunning performance of #windrush by @PhoenixLeeds this evening. When some of our politicians drag us down, our artists lift us up to remind us of our ancestry, our stories, our people and our power."* Audience member Birmingham

**Mission:**

During the current four-year funding period that runs to 2022 our mission is: ***'to inspire, entertain and educate new and existing audiences through dance, whilst enriching and embodying the spirit of multicultural Britain'*** – we aim to:

- increase our international profile following recent work in China, Germany, France and Switzerland
- Create works with choreographers that bring a distinctive cultural voice and narratives which are unknown or sometimes hidden to mainstream audiences
- Grow our audiences following record figures in 2018 with *Windrush: Movement of the People*
- Create a landmark production for our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2021
- Build our extensive access and education work beyond Leeds and further delivering dance GCSEs
- Increase revenue and relationships with the corporate sector following early success with Unilever and Leeds Bradford Airport

**Role Description**

Phoenix Dance Theatre is a vibrant, creative and professional organisation which requires compatible and strong leadership to help build on the Company's achievements and progress its ambitions.

Appointed by the trustees, the new Chair will join the organisation at an exciting time. They will be expected to lead the Board and assist in the Company's development to protect and enhance its artistic quality, audience development and financial resilience during a time of global and economic uncertainty.

The trustees seek a Chair who values and is able to articulate the rich heritage and diversity of Phoenix Dance Theatre and to act as a public figurehead and advocate for the Company.

Trustees are interested to see applications from leaders in education, contemporary arts, creative industries and media, but this is by no means exclusive and all applications are encouraged.

**Term**

Initially for a three year term renewable for an additional three years. The position is not remunerated but reasonable travel expenses can be paid (standard rail return).

**Remuneration**

This is a voluntary unpaid role, expenses will be paid where necessary.

**Overall objectives of the role**

- Provide leadership to the Board of Phoenix Dance Theatre ensuring they fulfil their responsibilities for governance of the company, enabling the organisation to realise its mission to inspire and entertain through dance, and to develop new audiences for dance, whilst enriching and embodying the spirit of a multi-cultural Britain
- To work in partnership with the Executive and Artistic Directors to develop and deliver the vision and strategy of the organisation
- To act as ambassador for Phoenix Dance Theatre, helping to shape external relationships that will enable it to secure funding from government and donors to fulfill its mission

**Key Responsibilities**

It is expected that, in addition to the statutory duties of a trustee as laid out in the trustee information pack, the Chair will provide approximately 1 day a month to the role which would include the following responsibilities:

**Board leadership and meetings**

- Chair meetings of the Board and, working with the Executive Director, ensure that, through the Board and its committees, it runs effectively, fulfils its duties and carries out resolutions.
- Call special meetings if necessary and that an atmosphere is created in which all Board members are encouraged to participate and challenge constructively and appropriately.
- Arrange for the Vice Chair to chair meetings of the Board in the Chair's absence.
- Ensure that high standards of corporate governance and ethical, professional behaviour are maintained and as appropriate introduced to meet changing circumstances and good custom and practice.
- Ensure collaborative and effective relationships between the Board, the Executive Director and the Artistic Director.
- Steer the organisation through an environment which can experience constant change in terms of funding, and national and international impacts.

**Fundraising and Development**

- Be a champion for fundraising, helping to identify and develop relationships with potential and existing donors and supporters.
- Represent the Board and organisation to external stakeholders, staff and other bodies, including funders, politicians, policy makers and the media where appropriate.

**Governance**

- With the Board, ensure that financial controls and systems of management and risk are in place and effectively operated and that the Board are kept informed in a timely and relevant manner of key issues and opportunities and performance against plan.
- Support, challenge and appraise the Artistic and Executive Directors in their running of the organisation and help achieve the essential balance between artistic and business endeavours,

ensuring due separation of the executive and non-executive roles in accordance with the principles of good corporate governance.

- Conduct periodic Board effectiveness reviews and ensure that new Board members are fully inducted and that existing Board members are appraised and contributing effectively.

### **Personal Attributes**

Below are a range of attributes that the Trustees hope for in the new Chair. Whilst these should be considered, the trustees are open to all applications which make a compelling case for the candidate's suitability to this role.

- A proven track record of successful leadership.
- A confident and able advocate for the arts and cultural sector with a commitment to the Company and its objectives.
- Ability to influence decision makers and build relationships for the Company.
- A champion of diversity.
- Integrity, tact, diplomacy and excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- An understanding of governance in the charitable or public sector.
- Financial and commercial acumen.

### **Application Process**

- If you would like to discuss the role prior to application, then please contact Executive Director Mark Hollander on 0113 236 8130.
- To apply, email your CV and a covering letter outlining why you would like to join the Board of Phoenix Dance Theatre and what you feel you can bring to the role of Chair. Please send your application to [mark.hollander@phoenixdancetheatre.co.uk](mailto:mark.hollander@phoenixdancetheatre.co.uk) by 9am Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019 with the subject heading 'Chair Application'
- Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an informal interview between 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May with the Artistic Director, Executive Director and at least one Trustee. A further shortlist will be selected and will be followed by a formal interview on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019 with members of the Board.