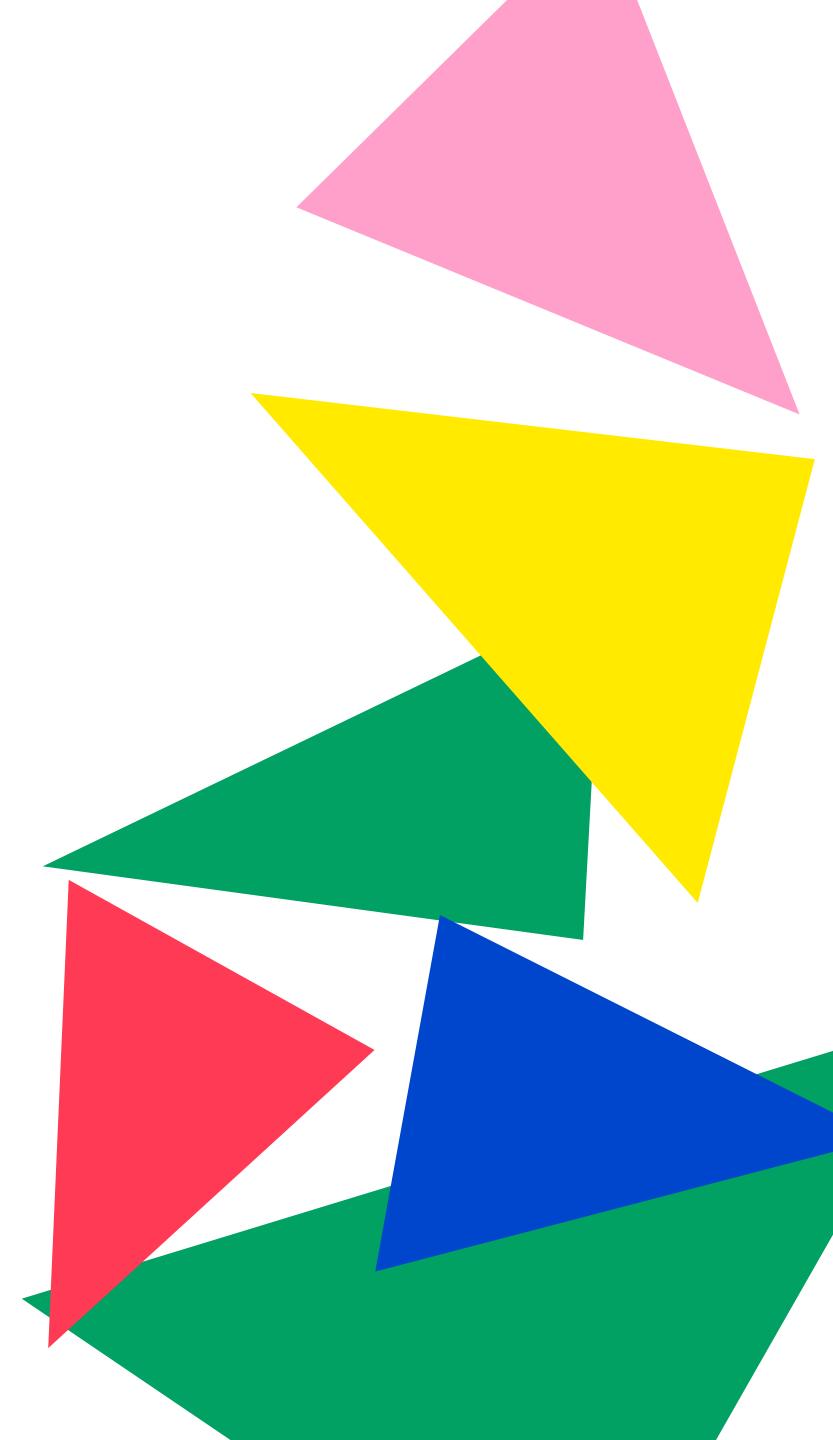


MERCURY

Artistic Director Candidate Pack

July 2024



Welcome from the Chief Executive

Thank you for your interest in the Mercury in Colchester and the role of Artistic Director.

As one of the most ambitious producing houses in the East, we pride ourselves on the high-quality, relevant and inclusive nature of all of our work. The Mercury's artistic programme aims to connect our audiences with a wide range of work across all genres on both our stages in Colchester, within our community and on tour in the UK and internationally.

The Mercury remains the only full time producing mid-scale venue in Essex funded by Arts Council England serving a population of 1.8m people. We are proud to be able to continue to produce at least seven productions annually both here at the Mercury, across the East of England and national touring.

We are seeking a dynamic, experienced director to join us as our new Artistic Director. You will have a proven record of creative leadership to curate and present a diverse and popular programme.

The successful candidate will provide inspirational leadership to the Mercury as a member of the Senior Management Team and will be instrumental in the curation and oversight of all our artistic programming.



Welcome from the Chief Executive continued

In this pack you will find:

- Background information on the Mercury
- Job description and person specification
- Information about living in Colchester
- Information about how to apply

Further information about the Mercury can be found on www.mercurytheatre.co.uk. We expect to make an appointment to this role by October 2024 with the ambition for the new Artistic Director to take up the role in December 2024/January 2025.

We are a family friendly organisation and were proud to have recently been named as Colchester's Business of the Year 2024, Employer of the Year 2022 and been nominated for a Stage Innovation award 2024.

Come and join us. We are committed to maintaining and building our audiences, delivering artistic excellence, and growing the Mercury's reputation as a launchpad for talent and innovation in the East of England and on tour across the UK.

We look forward to receiving your application.



Steve Mannix
Executive Director





Introduction

The Mercury Theatre, designed by Norman Downie, was opened on 10th May in 1972. Since its foundation, the Mercury has become one of the main centres of artistic excellence in the East of England, having built a large and diverse audience for its critically acclaimed programme of drama, musical theatre, family theatre, music and dance, at home and on tour.

The Mercury reopened in June 2021 following capital investment of **£14.2m** with state of the art facilities including a 532 seat theatre, a 98 seat studio, full on-site workshop and wardrobe facilities, rehearsal rooms, dance studio, dedicated creative learning space and a fully renovated café bar and front of house. Further capital investment takes place this summer to include new rehearsal and meeting spaces, investment in LED stage lighting and digital infrastructure to allow for live streaming and future digital distribution of our work.

We are proud to be in the top 25% of sustainable public buildings in the UK and the most sustainable in Colchester.

With an annual turnover of **£5m**, the Mercury is a significant local employer and a major driver of Colchester's creative economy. The theatre plays a key leadership and strategic role in the cultural life of Essex and the wider geographical area of East Anglia. It is the only full-time producing venue in Essex and one of only three in the eastern region.

In the City of Colchester, we are a placemaking organisation for Essex. We seek to connect with and support artists, freelancers, performers and industry professionals across the Eastern region to ensure our work remains as accessible and inclusive as possible, reaching as many people as we can.

Mission

The Mercury creates and shares stories that are exhilarating, revelatory and relevant. Through the reinvention of classic texts and the creation of bold, new writing, we believe that the transformative power of theatre can enrich the lives of our community.

The Mercury is a significant regional developer of new talent, working with a range of partners across the arts, education and creative industries to deliver a studio programme and a learning, participation and professional development programme aimed at nurturing the next generation of theatre makers.

Everything we do is driven by our values of quality, innovation, diversity, and connection.

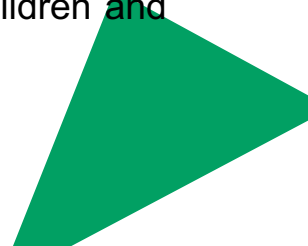
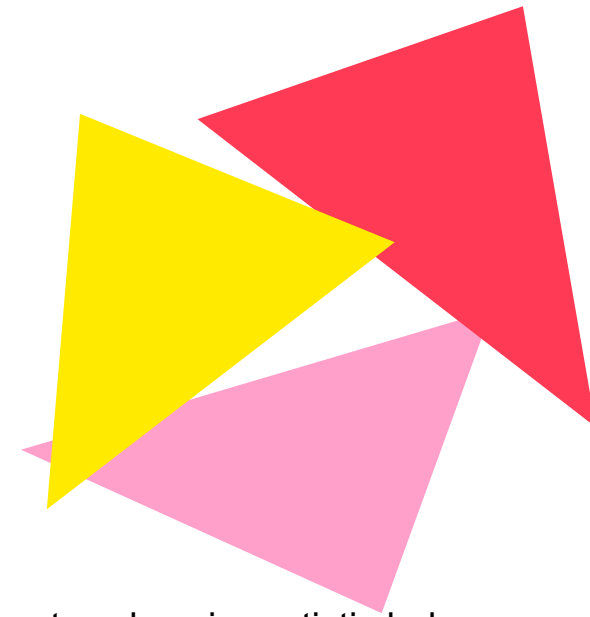
We are Colchester. We are for everyone.



Vision

Our vision is of the Mercury as a vibrant, welcoming artistic hub at the heart of the cultural life of Colchester and Essex; a place where the diverse communities of the city and its surrounding region can come together to experience exceptional live theatre and a rich programme of other performing arts; a place where anyone, regardless of background, can get involved with our creative processes and start to realise their own creative potential.

Our vision is of the Mercury as a strategically important part of the national theatre ecology and the wider creative sector, providing an important regional pipeline for creative and technical talent and contributing to the range and quality of mid-scale touring theatre, co-producing with a particular focus on popular genres, musicals, drama and work for children and families.



Mercury Governance, Staffing and Audience

The Mercury is a registered charity and operates a group of limited companies. As such, we are overseen by a non-executive Board of Directors of 15 people which is chaired by Robert West (Head of Education and Skills - CBI). The Board delegate day-to-day management of the theatre to Steve Mannix, Chief Executive, supported by the senior management team. We have a talented and dedicated team of around 88 full time equivalent staff and we employ numerous freelance artists, practitioners and casual staff.

The theatre's market penetration is strong, and we continue to have good reach throughout Essex and the Eastern region. 52% of our visitors come from within the city boundary. Last year, as recovery continued post-covid, average attendance reached 78% with a record breaking panto. 2023-24 Christmas performance achieved 98% capacity.



Artistic Development and Programming

We believe that our vibrant and diverse programme and artistic delivery is the heart and centre of the Mercury. We are steadfast in our ability to be able to span both popular, new and classical work within our programme. As a regional theatre we fundamentally believe that we should present 'something for everyone'. Our audiences should be able to access a 'good night out' of popular titles, comedy, music through to new writing, non-professional work and contemporary forms.

Last year, the Mercury benefited from a loyal audience of over **105,000** attendees with an additional **38,027** children, young people and adults involved in our Creative Engagement Programme at the Mercury and throughout Essex. A further **30,000** people attended non-ticketed events in our Café/Bar, on our piazza or within the city.



We are proud to be a full time producing mid-scale regional venue presenting at least 7 Mercury Productions annually. This would not be possible without our dedicated in-house full time professional teams across producing, workshop, stage management, wardrobe, operations, finance and marketing. We are forever grateful for their energy, professionalism, enthusiasm and creativity for ensuring all our productions have high production values. Each production remains vibrant and engaging for all our audiences no matter their background.

Our new Artistic Director will curate the Mercury's future artistic vision, in collaboration with the SMT, mindful of audience engagement across our produced and visiting work. It's an exciting but challenging role.

The Mercury is committed to contributing to the wider ecology for theatre across the UK and regularly tours and co-produces work. Current partners include – Salisbury Playhouse, Bolton Octagon, Northern Stage, The Rose Theatre, Kingston, The New Wolsey, Theatre Royal, Bury, High Tide, Norwich Theatre, Landmark Theatres and Queens Theatre, Hornchurch.

Artistic Development and Programming continued...

We are delighted that we have a great relationship with a wide range of mid, large and commercial theatre producers and venues who are eager to co-produce with us for a first, second and third time. Last year, the Mercury moved to a new model of co-producing some of our work over the next three years with our associate companies including Frantic Assembly, Graeae Theatre Company, English Touring Theatre and Paines Plough. Together we hope to draw on this nationally and internationally recognised artistic talent to curate a range of work that is both contemporary, new and classical here in Essex and on tour across the UK and internationally.

We acknowledge the challenges that we and our other regional producing mid-scale partner venues are facing at present; reduced and standstill subsidy, unpredictable audience attendance post Covid, inflation and the cost of living crisis.

The Mercury and its team has been able to embrace these challenges and sustain and grow its artistic programme. Our work spans both the commercial and subsidised sectors. Our new Artistic Director will feel comfortable within this environment.

The Mercury prides itself on having the largest Creative Engagement team of any arts or cultural organisation in Essex. Our extensive programme co-creates work in schools, youth centres and community settings across the city and Essex engaging with more than 22,000 people a year. We have long-established partnerships with key community organisations, Universities, Adult and Community Learning and others such as Essex Music Service, Essex Education Authority, Colchester Refugee Action and others to ensure our work reaches those most marginalised and excluded to find a voice and engage in the arts and civic society.

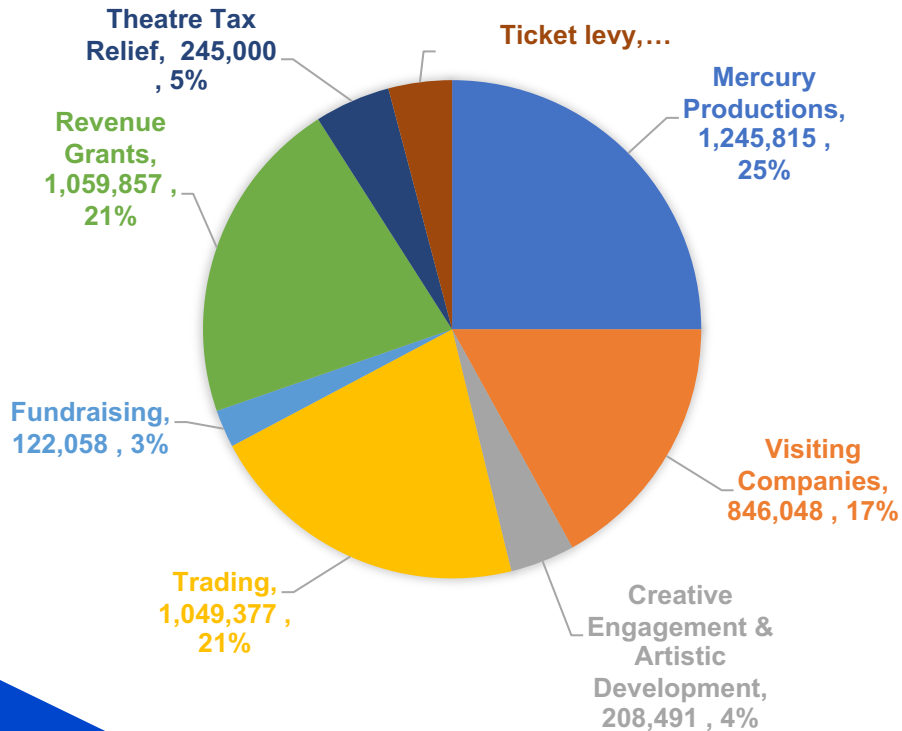




Finance

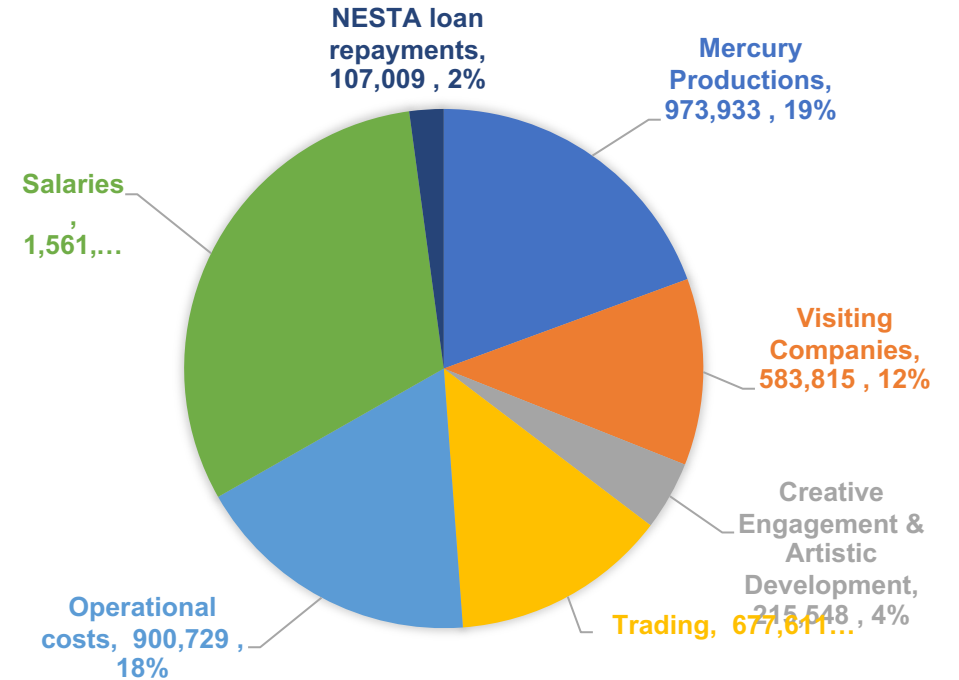
Last year the Mercury reached a record turnover of **£5m** having doubled in size in just **9** years. We are revenue funded by Arts Council England, Colchester City Council and Essex County Council (**20%**) with grant aid of **£1 million** and generate (**80%**) **£4m** from our box office, trading, fundraising and additional income.

INCOME



Total income: £4,982,056

EXPENDITURE



Total expenditure: £5,019,732

2023 – 2024 The Mercury in numbers

- Performances in the studio and theatre: 497

- Audiences at ticketed events: 105,580

- Staff: 88 (ft & pt)

- Freelancers: 172

- Cost to each Colchester resident: £0.87p

- Community attendees at non ticketed events: 38,186

- Creative Engagement sessions: 3,467

- Creative engagement activity attendees: 36,027

- Ice-creams sold: 28,259

- Inward investment to the local economy: £4.2million

Living in Colchester

Boasting strong commuter links, a world class arts and cultural scene and charming old rustic pubs serving up gastro delights, the list of reasons to move to Colchester is endless.

Renowned for being Britain's first city and former capital of Roman Britain, its rich history dates back over 2000 years and is ripe for exploring. Colchester Castle is one of the standout attractions as one of England's most significant heritage sites. Colchester was recently gifted modern city status, confirming that we're not all about the past. 21st Century Colchester is also a thriving, modern destination with first class visitor attractions, and cultural sites.

In 2022, Colchester finally gained city status and is steeped in so much history, it is surprisingly contemporary in its outlook. It provides its residents with all the amenities we've come to appreciate from modern living. Foodies will rejoice at the plethora of food options available - these range from budget dining to world class Michelin star restaurants - and shoppers are presented with a mixture niche independent shops neighbouring the usual big name retail giants.



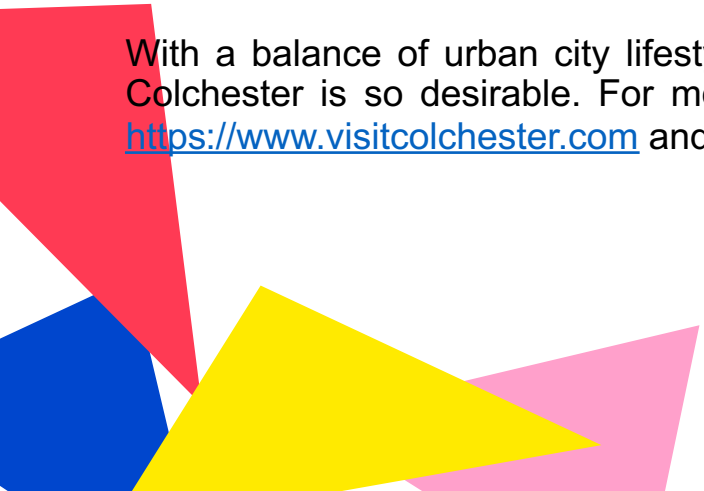
Living in Colchester continued

Colchester is surrounded by the green pastures of the picturesque Essex and Suffolk countryside, 135 square miles of coast and countryside. The idyllic villages of Wivenhoe and Dedham, famed as Constable country, are a short drive away, and you're less than 25 minutes away from the Essex Coast and Mersea Island, a postcard perfect seaside resort with a world famous oyster bar.

Situated in the north east of Essex, Colchester has a population of 195,000 and is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. It is extremely popular with commuters with excellent train links to London Liverpool Street - only 45 minutes away. The A12 takes you straight into London and Stansted airport is only 30 miles away.

It is perhaps stating the obvious but the cost of living in Colchester is substantially cheaper than London. Rent for a one-bedroom apartment is approximately 58% cheaper than the capital.

With a balance of urban city lifestyle and a rural living, there are many reasons why Colchester is so desirable. For more information about our wonderful city check out <https://www.visitcolchester.com> and <https://www.visitessex.com>.



Artistic Director job description

Job Title	Artistic Director
Department	Executive
Responsible to	Chief Executive/Executive Director
Responsible for	Head of Creative Engagement, Producers and freelance creative teams
Key working relationships	Deputy Executive Director, Operations Director Finance Director Development Director Head of Marketing and Communications

Purpose of the Post

The Artistic Director is responsible, in conjunction with the Executive Director, for the development and programming of the Mercury Theatre's artistic programme.

The Artistic Director will co-deliver an ambitious artistic programme, including the creation of *Mercury Productions* that inspire and enthuse the Mercury's audiences, stakeholders and staff. They will support the Executive Director to identify opportunities to meet key business and audience development objectives and to extend the life of Mercury Productions through co-productions, touring and transfers. The Artistic Director will lead the strategy for the Creative Engagement activities of the Mercury.

Strategic priorities of the Artistic Director

- To maintain and develop the theatre's role as a leading regional producing theatre with a national and international reputation.
- To curate an imaginative, engaging and financially viable programme of Mercury Productions and visiting work alongside the Executive Director and senior management team (SMT).
- To ensure the theatre's work is made widely available and that opportunities for artists, audiences and participants are maximised.
- To ensure that the balance between the theatre's creative aspirations and financial viability is understood and maintained.
- To maintain and build on the significant role that the theatre plays in the communities of Colchester and Essex.
- To maintain positive and productive partnerships with the theatre's stakeholders and supporters.
- To ensure that new opportunities for income development and growth are explored and exploited.
- To ensure that the theatre's business plan is implemented and reviewed.
- As part of the SMT to provide leadership, management and motivation for the team as a whole and in particular the direct reports.
- To ensure that the theatre is a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Principal Responsibilities

Strategic

- Provide artistic input into the programming of work for both the theatre and studio while balancing the business plan objectives.
- Provide input to enable the theatre to achieve its artistic and strategic aims within a changing external environment.
- Work with the Development Director, Head of Marketing and Communications and marketing team to ensure a clear identity and brand for the Mercury is communicated.
- Staying abreast of current strategic thinking, policies and practices that might inform funding opportunities for all of the theatre's artistic activity

Programme Planning and Producing

- Work with the Executive Director and producing team to curate an artistic programme including in-house and visiting productions, co-productions and collaborations, new writing, commissions and any other forms of creative work as appropriate, that appeals to a broad range of audiences and increases the diversity and loyalty of audiences.
- Direct a number of Mercury Productions, in agreement with the Executive Director and work with the Producing team on the engagement of guest directors, designers and other creative team members where appropriate.
- Ensure that the artistic programme is appropriately resourced.
- Work with the Executive Director to ensure that all creative activity achieves its income generation targets.
- Work with the Executive Director and producing team on all aspects of programme planning and delivery including identification and clearing of rights, scheduling, budget management, touring and co-production activity and casting.
- Work closely with the Executive Director and producing team to devise a programme of performances into the studio and the Café bar ensuring a wide cultural offer.
- Work with the Development Director liaising with the marketing department on the development of marketing plans and resources.
- In collaboration with the Deputy Executive Director, liaise with the Production department on the delivery of all scheduling, budgetary, physical and technical aspects of productions.
- Work with the Executive Director and producing team, to explore all opportunities for programme exploitation, including identifying and negotiating touring and co-production opportunities.
- Lead on the Mercury's environmentally aware productions in line with Green Book recommendations.
- Lead the associate artist programme.

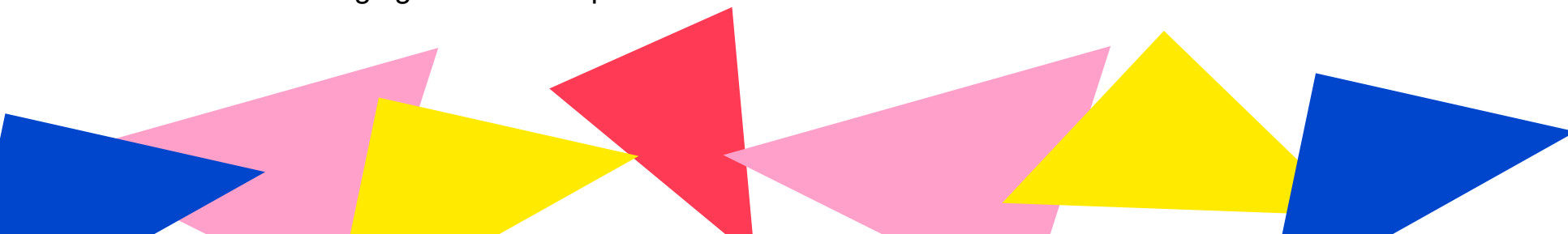
Principal Responsibilities continued

Creative Engagement

- Curate the creative vision and future direction of all participation and community development activity for the theatre.
- Work with the Executive Director and Head of Creative Engagement to identify external creative partnerships that enrich the theatre's programme, reputation and reach.
- Create a culture of creative partnership working in the department.
- Ensure cohesion across all strands of participatory work and synergy between the artistic programme and creative engagement activity.
- Oversee and initiate an innovative programme of artist and emerging talent development.

External Relationships

- Where appropriate represent the theatre at a wide range of local, regional, national and international fora and networking opportunities.
- Promote the theatre directly to targeted industry contacts.
- Support the Executive Director to ensure open and productive relations with the theatre's main funders.
- Build new partnerships and identify opportunities for expanding the theatre's reputation both nationally and internationally.
- In collaboration with the Executive Director, SMT, and producing team develop and maintain relationships with co-producing and touring partners.

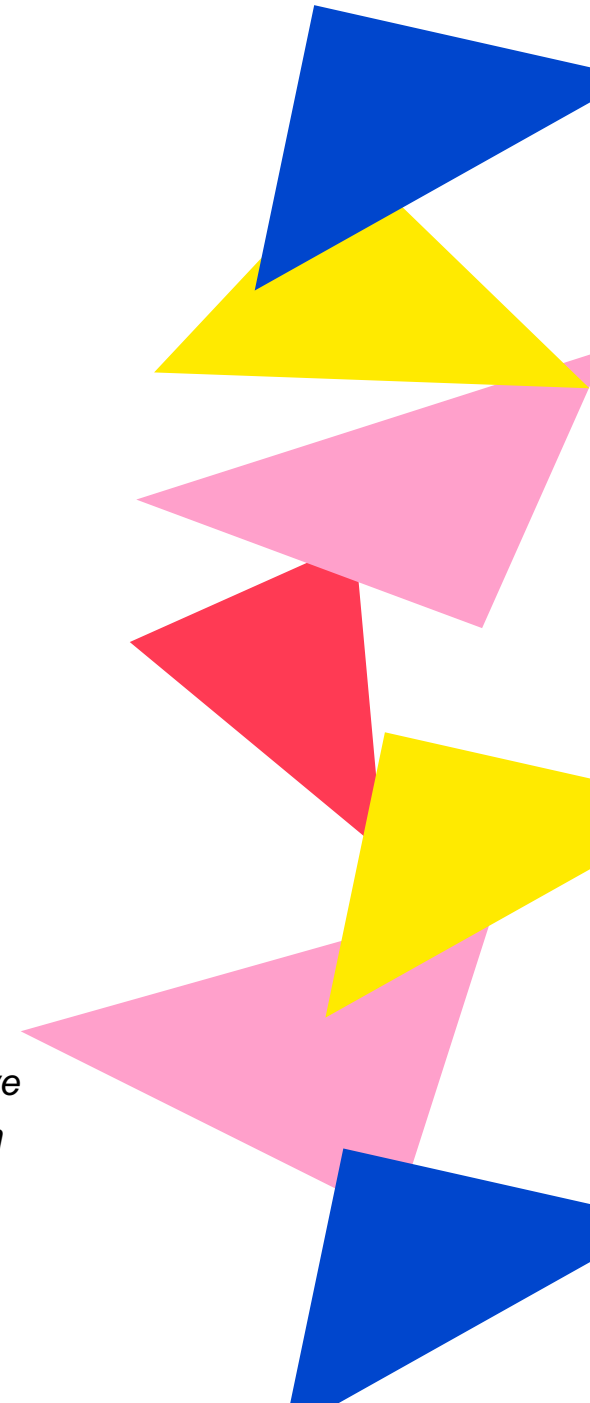


Principal Responsibilities continued

General Duties

- Attend and participate in meetings of Mercury Board and sub committees as requested.
- Produce timely, written reports of achievement and challenges against objectives and targets for the Board.
- Participate actively as a member of the senior management team working effectively with other staff members to be fully informed of the financial and operational issues that impact on the artistic programme.
- Deputise for other members of SMT where necessary to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of all the organisation's activities.
- Maintain positive and effective relationships with colleagues across the organisation.
- Maximise income and minimise expenditure whilst maintain high quality in delivery.
- Adhere to all Mercury Theatre policies included Safeguarding, Health and Safety and environmental policies.
- Attend and contribute to staff meetings and/or training sessions.
- Undertake any further duties as may be reasonably requested.

This job description is a guide to the nature of the work required of this position. It is neither wholly comprehensive nor restrictive and does not preclude change or development that might be required in the future. It does not form part of the contract of employment.



Person specification

Essential professional competencies

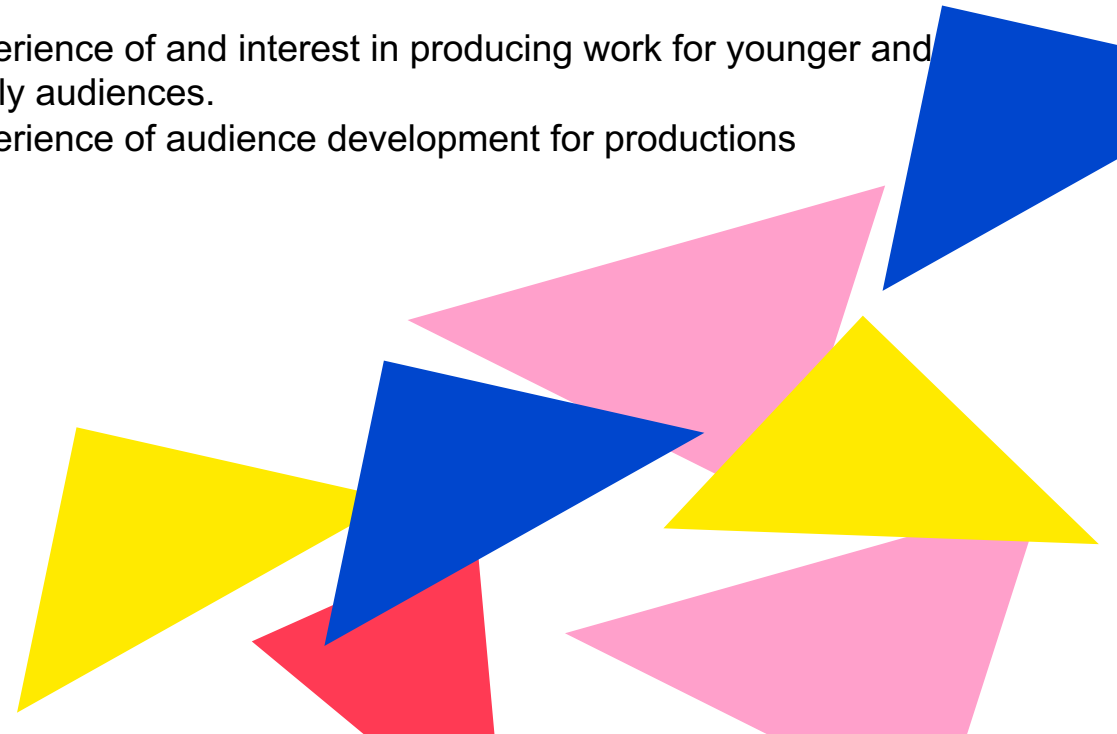
- Ability to curate and articulate inspirational artistic vision and ambition.
- Strong track record of successful directing or producing professional theatre productions in a variety of spaces and for diverse audiences.
- Ability to commission and support new plays.
- Proven ability to collaborate with artists of the highest calibre.
- Experience of partnership working such as co-productions, touring and transfers.
- Ability to nurture talent and potential in others.
- Demonstrable personnel and resource management skills.
- An entrepreneurial spirit and ability to contribute to the theatre's development initiatives
- Excellent project management skills.
- Experience of contract negotiation with agents and artists and a good working knowledge of the relevant industry contracts.
- Experience of working with marketing teams to reach target audiences and achieve sales targets.
- Excellent communication and advocacy skills.
- Ability to delegate, negotiate, resolve conflict, and manage individuals' performance.
- IT and computer skills relevant to the post's requirements.

Personal Qualities

- Excellent interpersonal skills with an ability to build rapport and partnerships and communicate with people at all levels.
- Self-disciplined, organised and self-motivating.
- Ability to lead and work as part of a team.
- Adaptability and receptivity to new ideas and initiatives.
- Ability to work under pressure and manage competing deadlines.

Desirable Professional Competencies

- Experience of and interest in producing work for younger and family audiences.
- Experience of audience development for productions





Outline of Terms and Conditions

- Salary:** £50,000 - £60,000 per annum depending on experience
- Term:** 5 years fixed term, with the possibility of a second term.
- Hours:** 37.5 hours per week, although additional hours may be necessary in order to fulfil the post's requirements for which time off in lieu is available. This post will require the successful candidate to work unsocial hours including evening and weekends on occasion. You are expected to take appropriate meal and tea breaks which are unpaid.
- Annual Leave:** Annual leave entitlement is 20 days for each holiday year plus statutory Bank Holidays. When you complete three years' service, your holiday entitlement will increase to 25 days per annum.
- Probationary Period:** Six months
- Notice Period:** Six months by either party in writing after an initial probationary period during which time the notice period is one month by either party
- DBS Check:** An enhanced DBS check will be required.
- Pension:** The Theatre operates a pension scheme that meets the government's requirements under auto-enrolment.
- Location:** The post-holder must be prepared to live within commutable distance of the theatre in order to fulfil the role.
- Other Benefits**
- Relocation package available.
 - The company offers an interest free season ticket loan.
 - Discount on food and drink in our café bar
 - Access to the discounted staff menu in the café bar
 - The company encourages attendance at performances with an allocation of tickets to employees (subject to availability and the Mercury's ticket policy)
 - A discount on specific Creative Engagement activities.



How to apply

You are encouraged to contact Deborah Sawyerr, Deputy Executive Director, to discuss the role informally and confidentially. In addition, Steve Mannix, our Executive Director/CEO is also available to all candidates. Please contact her on deborah.sawyerr@mercurytheatre.co.uk to arrange a convenient time.

To apply for this post, please send

- a letter of no more than 3 sides of A4 or a video of no more than 5 minutes, explaining what attracts you to this position, and evidence of your ability to meet the job description and person specification.
- Your CV
- Names and contact details for two employment/professional referees, however, we shall not take up references unless candidates are invited to a second interview
- A completed Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form (downloadable from <https://www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/vacancies>)

Applications should be submitted to deborah.sawyerr@mercurytheatre.co.uk by **10:00am on Tuesday, 20 August 2024.**

First round interviews will take place on Wednesday, 11 September 2024 and second round interviews will take place on Thursday, 19 September 2024.

The Mercury Theatre is an equal opportunities employer and actively promotes diversity in our staff team. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons regardless of their race, sex, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or age. Please let us know if you need this information in a different format by contacting Deborah by phone on 01206 577006 or via the email address above.

MERCURY

A photograph of three performers on a stage. They are wearing sequined, patterned dresses. The performer on the left is in a dark purple dress, the middle one in a silver dress, and the right one in a green dress. All three have their right arms raised in a 'V' hand gesture. The background is a shimmering, purple and blue tinsel curtain. To the left, a pianist is partially visible behind a piano. To the right, a person in a dark suit and hat is seen from behind, possibly a stagehand or another performer.

www.mercurytheatre.co.uk

July 2024

Mercury production photography: Pamela Raith Photography and Will Green