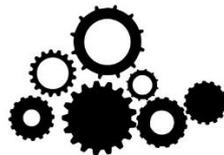




***...Your local theatre in the heart
of Penzance, West Cornwall...***

CHAIR Recruitment

October 2022



**PUBLIC LEADERS
APPOINTMENTS**

Introduction

Due to the upcoming retirement of our long-serving Chair, we are seeking to appoint a replacement to support the Theatre Manager and lead our wider team in taking the charity forward.

The Acorn is a progressive performing arts and cultural charity serving the local community of Penzance and West Cornwall with a mission to connect communities through culture and creativity. It has been an important community asset for more than five decades and with the help of our wonderful volunteers, serves some of the most economically deprived, disadvantaged and rural communities in Cornwall and England.

'We believe that performing arts improve the quality of our lives and should be open to all. Our aim, therefore, is to provide a diverse programme of live performing arts for local people at affordable prices and, in so doing, support local performing artists'

We receive funding from Cornwall Council's Culture and Creative Programme and our Strategic Plan is strongly aligned with Cornwall Council's creative vision.

We provide a high-quality cultural programme of live music and performing arts, support local groups and organisations, nurture local creative talent and Cornish heritage, and host weekly community classes and other events to give access to the arts to a wide audience. In 2019, our last Covid-free year, we put on 185 events with over 18,000 visits to the theatre. In 2022, as we continue to emerge from Covid, we will put on 133 events with an estimated 13,500 attendances - and we already have 125 events booked so far for 2022.

Between 2022 and 2026 we aim to develop our outreach work to economically deprived areas of Penzance/West Penwith.

Thanks to recent successful fundraising initiatives with our fundraising partner, Two Green Magpies, the Acorn has been completely refurbished and has healthy financial reserves and strong forward bookings and ticket sales to guard against future risks and deliver its charitable objectives.

We are beginning our search for a new Chair in turbulent times and need to ensure that the organisation remains resilient, financially stable and ambitious, seizing the opportunities ahead to continue to deliver our Mission.

If you have a passion for arts, cultural and creative industries and would like to make a positive contribution to the sector, we would be delighted to hear from you.

We are particularly keen to hear from people who are from groups under-represented in the performing arts and at Board level.

About us

The Acorn's mission is to provide and enable life-enriching experiences for the community of Penzance and West Cornwall, through a diverse range of live performance arts that are exciting, inspiring and of high quality at affordable prices, whether as a participant or audience member.

The objectives of the charity include the promotion, improvement, advancement, education and encouragement of the performing arts in Penzance and West Cornwall. This is achieved by arranging and facilitating events within the venue to promote the arts within local communities and by offering the general public the opportunity to participate in events and classes.

The Acorn is West Cornwall's favourite affordable theatre for live music and performing arts with a reputation for innovative programming. For nearly 50 years we have hosted a huge variety of acts, groups and projects within theatre, dance, music, comedy, children's theatre, film, choirs, youth and community engagement. Our facilities and atmosphere attract performers from the regular national and international tour circuits to play in this corner of Cornwall. The Acorn also nurtures regional talent by supporting the development of new work, hosting community events and providing an affordable venue for educational arts activities.

The Acorn is run by Theatre Manager, Richie, the Theatre Administrator, Helga, and our wonderful pool of dedicated volunteers (currently numbering 49 with a further 15 awaiting training. As a community theatre, we are very grateful for the fantastic support of our volunteers who enable the day-to-day operation of the charity by helping with activities such as selling tickets, stewarding, marketing and publicity.

The registered name of the charity is the Cornwall Theatre Company Limited, but everyone knows us as The Acorn, Penzance.

Take a virtual tour of the theatre: [**Virtual Tour**](#)

History

In 1969, the former Wesleyan Methodist chapel on Parade Street was bought by Gay Sagar-Fenton who donated it to a local theatre company, the Penzance Arts Centre, to enable them to run it as a theatre. In 1987, another charity, the Cornwall Theatre Company Ltd., a small-scale touring theatre company, took over the assets and liabilities of the Penzance Arts Centre. Their aim was to expand audiences by injecting a new enthusiasm for the arts into the community and widening the spectrum of arts provided.

In June 1996, the Acorn Arts Centre was awarded a large grant from the National Lottery to undertake essential refurbishment of its premises and re-design the internal layout including improved access. Building works were completed in 1998 and the Acorn Arts Centre re-opened as a flexible venue with a 190-seat main auditorium and a smaller basement 'Cabaret' bar and theatre space with an 80-seat capacity.

After a brief period of closure in 2010, The Acorn was reopened and began to rebuild and once more occupies a vital place in the community as the main centre for music, theatre, dance and other live arts in West Cornwall.

The Acorn welcomes a wide range of arts practitioners and art forms, including live music, theatre, poetry readings, circus skills, storytelling, dance, film, lectures and the visual arts. We also host charity fundraising events, classes, workshops, children's events, album launches, meetings, markets, private parties and wedding receptions and even the occasional wake. From international tours to school plays, the Acorn has a welcome for everyone interested in the arts.

The Acorn has long had an important part to play in our communities in Penzance, Newlyn and West Penwith with a commitment to promote inclusion and arts for all. To continue this, with the support of Cornwall Council we are trying to deepen our understanding of current equality, diversity and inclusion issues in West Cornwall in order to play our role in ensuring that Penzance is an inclusive town and respectful of everyone, irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or abilities. Therefore, over the coming months, Acorn's trustees and employees will be participating in discussions and events as we develop our anti-discrimination policies.

Our Board

The Acorn Theatre (also known as Cornwall Theatre Company) is a charitable company limited by guarantee with a board of unpaid trustees. Our board is currently made up of seven trustees who bring a broad range of experience, skills and backgrounds.

Paul Mullin, Chair, Fundraising Lead – worked in senior management in the NHS before retiring to Cornwall. He has strong business, governance and leadership skills and brings a lifelong interest in theatre and performing arts to his role as chair of the Acorn.

Claire Belsham, Vice Chair, Operational Lead – Claire has spent her life working with charities, from running wildlife conservation projects in Africa and Europe, to coastal conservation on the Lizard. She has assisted the Acorn for many years as a volunteer, Trustee and as a temporary part-time Administrator. Claire believes in the power of the arts for social cohesion and wellbeing and enjoys playing a role in helping to keep the doors open to this very special venue.

Andrew Edmonds, Finance Lead – an entrepreneur who set up companies from scratch, developing them into profit before selling on and moving on. Currently, Andrew also works with another arts-based Charity in Cornwall where cross referencing is sometimes beneficial to both.

Dave Hunter, Education Lead – Retired faculty head (Expressive Arts). Currently Artistic Director of Cornwall Youth Theatre Company and Event Manager at Penlee Park Open Air Theatre in Penzance. Experienced and interested in youth arts, participation and development.

Alastair Johnston, Diversity & Inclusion Lead – retired from teaching Music and Performing Arts in secondary and middle schools in 2020. In August 2021, Alastair and family relocated to Penzance and are currently enjoying the multitude of possibilities that this West Cornwall offers. He still regularly composes, and his 2021 organ piece Fête won by competition inclusion in a new anthology.

Alex Sowerby, Lead TBC – newly appointed, Alex has experience in theatre, hospitality and customer services, having worked around venues in London. He is currently manager at The Minack Theatre giving him experience of how different departments in theatres work.

Jo Willsher, Policies lead – Joined as a Trustee in January 2022 and is a law graduate with a Legal Practice Course qualification. She was an insurance underwriter in Lloyds of London before having a break to raise family. Jo then worked as a Parish Clerk for two years before starting a clinical homeopathy practice ten years ago. She continues to split her time between Essex & Penzance.

Gerrard Willsher, Associate Trustee – Legal Advisor

The Role

As Chair, you and the Board of Trustees will provide strategic direction, governance and assurance for this small but vibrant charity (gross turnover £300,000pa - 2019, our last full trading year pre-Covid and our target for 2023 / 2024), supporting the Theatre Manager and wider team whilst leading the charity to reach its full creative potential and remain financially resilient.

The most important aspect of this role is to support the Theatre Manager and his team as they run the theatre day to day and make programming decisions. This involves building rapport, acting as a sounding board and discussing issues as they arise and, critically, avoiding any temptation to micro-manage or dabble in programming.

The role requires strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, business acumen and calm, sound judgement in decision making. Ideally, we are also seeking someone who has a knowledge of charity fundraising or an understanding of the importance of fundraising.

We ask that you organise and chair Board meetings (up to 10 per year) and support the work of the Board, so experience of organising and chairing meetings is essential, ideally at senior level. Experience as a Trustee, Executive or Non-Executive Director would be a distinct advantage.

The ideal candidate would live locally and bring all or most of the following skills and experience:

- Excellent people skills and emotional intelligence
- Strong communication and leadership skills
- A solid understanding of financial management
- Experience of chairing senior meetings
- An enthusiasm for the performing arts and the contribution they can make to enhancing people's lives
- An understanding of the importance of fundraising or knowledge of charity fundraising
- Support our mission and be aligned to our values
- Be fully committed to Diversity and Inclusion and understand the value of engaging a wide range of voices in governance
- An understanding of the charitable and/or not-for-profit sectors

We are committed to ensuring our team is representative of the community we serve and that there is a diversity of perspectives on the Board. We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds. We do not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, or other characteristic protected by law.

Commitment

The charity's Chair (and board members) serve a three-year term and are then eligible for reappointment at the end of each term for an additional term, up to three terms in total.

Meetings currently take place on the third Monday of each month, ordinarily in person, but with the option for remote / online meetings.

The Chair and Trustees are each asked to volunteer their time for 6 events per year.

The role of Chair is not remunerated, although travel / essential expenses may be claimed.

Appointment Process

If you are interested in this opportunity, we encourage confidential conversations with our recruitment partner Anna Jay (MD of Public Leaders Appointments) anna@publicleadersappointments.com or 07904 236 348, or our current Chair, Paul Mullin, via office@theacornpenzance.com or 07903 938 672 in advance of your application, which should consist of:

- A covering letter on one side of A4 outlining your motivations for applying and highlighting how your skills, knowledge and experience meet the requirements of our role.
- A comprehensive CV, LinkedIn profile or professional biography, including your recent achievements and the details of two referees

Applications should be sent to anna@publicleadersappointments.com by midday on Monday, 28th November 2022, with reference "ACORN".

Timetable

- Open invitation to interested parties to visit the Theatre, meet Claire Belsham, Vice Chair, and Richie Cawley, Theatre Manager, w/c 21st November 2022, by appointment.
- Closing dates for applications: Midday on Monday, 28th November 2022.
- Interviews: Thursday, 1st December or Friday 2nd December
- Note: The current Chair will be available in December & January for induction and handover.

Enclosures:

1. Strategic Plan, 2022-26 – outline from Awayday discussions
2. Annual Trustees Statement & Accounts 2021

