The Play House

Artistic Director

Recruitment Pack

0121 265 4425
www.theplayhouse.org.uk



Job Description

Job Title: Artistic Director.

Reporting to: Board of Trustees.

Salary: £42,000 per annum

Work schedule: 37.5 hours per week. Normal office hours are 9.00 a.m. to 5 p.m. [30 minutes lunch break] Some hours outside of office hours may be required, for which overtime is not paid but TOIL (Time Off In Lieu) can be taken. We anticipate some evening and weekend work and travel within the UK.

Employment type: Permanent contract. Probationary period: 3 months.

Holiday allowance: 30 days annual leave as standard plus all Bank and Public Holidays normally observed in England and Wales.

Location: 2-4 Guild Close, Ladywood, Birmingham B16 8EL, and at other designated rehearsal spaces etc. Working from home/remote working sometimes possible by negotiation.

Pension: Auto-enrolment via The Pensions Trust with 3% employer contribution.

Line manages: General Manager, Teacher Actor, freelance artistic staff and placements.

Job closing date: 12 p.m. Monday 14th December 2026

Interview date: 18th December 2026

Anticipated date role will commence: January 2027 or after period of notice if necessary.

Purpose of the role:

Responsibility for creating, developing and implementing new artistically and educationally excellent programmes for children and young people which support the values of The Play House and the needs of the communities it serves.

Responsibility for delivering excellent artistic and educational tours and projects as required.

The artistic director will work closely with the team to:

- Take the lead in planning for future programming.
- Overseeing and delivering specific projects and events.
- Managing and supporting the company's Teacher/Actor and freelance creatives.
- Overseeing the team's work and ensuring we work towards fulfilling The Play House's values.
- Engage individuals from local communities and Birmingham arts sector to work with The Play House.
- Support fundraising where appropriate.
- Undertake general administration, such as emails, telephone calls and meetings.
- Support the maintenance of existing partnerships and build new partnerships.
- Report to a Board of Trustees alongside the general manager.

Responsibility for:

Artistic leadership

- Developing and implementing new strategic projects, with income-generating opportunities to augment the core work of the company
- Leading Fund-Raising policy, and working with the general manager to assess and pursue new funding opportunities, partnerships and development work.
- Providing artistic input into funding applications and making applications in collaboration with the General Manager
- Assessing current trends and opportunities to develop new programmes of work.
- Planning and delivering continual professional development for internal staff and external partners.
- Representing the company at external events.
- Project management of tours – including freelance staff, interns and work placements.
- Devising and rehearsing programmes of work.
- Delivery of productions in schools and additional venues.
- Maintaining day to day relationships with schools and other partners, including evaluation and feedback.
- Attending whole company training and development sessions as required.
- Collaborating with the general manager to sustain and develop relationships with project stakeholders.
- Administration – writing evaluation reports, developing and writing resource packs, documenting and writing up scripts, reporting, recording figures.
- Keeping abreast of developments in education, Theatre In Education (TIE) Drama in Education, and Theatre for Young Audiences
- Participating in peer mentoring as a team.

In consultation with the general manager, participating in any activities which advance the aims of the company.

The Opportunity

The Play House is seeking to appoint a dynamic and visionary artistic director to take the company in an ambitious creative direction whilst maintaining the company's core educational and participatory ethos. This is a senior executive role working alongside the general manager to ensure The Play House thrives artistically and financially.

A passion for children and young people's participatory artistic work is essential and is at the heart of The Play House's practice.

This is a challenging but exciting time to join The Play House as the company is moving through a period of change with ambitious plans for growth that will be steered by the artistic director and general manager. The Play House has ambitions to be in a position to apply to Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) over the next available cycle, and/or to seek other sources of sustainable long-term funding as available. The company has undergone a period of internal reflection under the temporary stewardship of Peter Wynne-Willson, refocusing the ethos, working methods and content of the offer to schools,

encouraging a return to a more collective sense with a higher proportion of collaborative working, longer contracts where possible and investment in ambitious and thought-through approaches to the core work of the company.

The Play House is ready for a new artistic director to be outward-looking, bring new perspectives and connections to support us to better reflect the Birmingham communities we serve.

Leading The Play House alongside the general manager, you will be supported throughout your time at the company. You will have autonomy over your role and make decisions to benefit the communities we serve as well as The Play House. There will be an opportunity for a handover period and continued involvement of the Interim Director in an advisory capacity if needed, to maximise the sense of continuity.

We're seeking someone creative, ambitious and determined; someone with an understanding of the full potential and unique power of participatory TIE, a track record of directing, devising and producing education and/or community programmes/performances.

This may be your first permanent artistic director role but you will have experience and the confidence to develop children and young people's programmes of work, direct Teacher Actors and strategically work with the general manager and a Board of Trustees.

We want to be the change we want to see in the arts. The Theatre Industry is disproportionately represented by people who are white, able-bodied and from a narrow range of socio-economic backgrounds. We seek to encourage applications from those who are currently under-represented in the Theatre Industry and within The Play House.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of those working in and for our organisation, in whatever capacity.

We believe that inviting and supporting applications from people with a diverse range of backgrounds, identities and life experiences strengthens and enriches the work that we do, as well as enabling us to speak to and reflect our audience.

The Play House supports the More than a Moment pledge, and as such is committed to a number of actions to support Black* artists and theatre makers, especially in the Midlands. This includes representation across the organisation, and as Black people are currently under-represented within The Play House, we particularly welcome applications from anyone from these groups. *(Black African, Caribbean, Afro-Latinx and African American heritage and those of mixed Black heritage who identify as such [definition as adopted by the Black Ticket Project]).



About the Organisation

Mission Statement: The Play House aims to inspire children and young people to make sense of the world they live in through participatory theatre arts.

The Play House Theatre in Education company, [previously called Language Alive] has been helping schools bring the wonder of the world into classrooms for over 40 years. When fully operational, we work in over fifty schools a year with our touring programme of performances and workshops which bring the curriculum to life for over 15,000 children annually aged 3-11 and beyond.

The Play House works primarily with Birmingham primary schools in lower socio-economic areas of the city and an engagement with The Play House is often a child's first experience of live theatre. We are passionate about making that experience have as much impact as possible both creatively and educationally. It is our aim to expand children's aspirations and inspire their curiosity no matter what theme or story we are telling. The Play House's style of Theatre in Education involves high levels of participation and, because we work with small groups, never bigger than class size and sometimes much smaller, we can offer every child the opportunity to shape the drama. We often put our participants in a role in order to immerse them further in the drama and give them agency over the story and dilemmas within.

Play House projects and workshops can take place in school halls, classrooms, parks, libraries, heritage sites and children's centres. We employ a repertoire of techniques such as interactive storytelling, imaginative play and dramatic problem solving.

The Play House also creates bespoke projects in partnership with schools and other organisations. These projects are designed to complement the core work which is available in repertoire, and to help contribute to the sustainability of the company. We also create bespoke professional development in using drama and storytelling.

It is our ambition to engage participants in a creative and imaginative process that will be both unique and memorable and that will stimulate inquiry and learning within the fictional worlds we create.

We want to reflect the Birmingham communities we serve more.

Currently The Play House is exploring ways to access organisational development funding to support the growth of the company, new ways of working, develop creative practice in relation to children and young people's work and how to meaningfully place children and young people at the heart of The Play House.

The company is currently led by Peter Wynne-Willson [Interim Director] and Bally Sembi [General Manager] The only other contracted company member is Malcolm Jennings [Actor Teacher] Other staff are taken on for projects, with the current model being two extra Actor-Teachers on a 9-week contract delivering 'The Last Train' with other programmes being devlivered by these and by Malcolm, or by freelance colleagues on short-term contracts.

The Play House works with a range of freelancers to support the company's delivery.

The company currently has a menu of available work, and in addition is at various stages of discussing future extra projects involving funding from The Arts Council and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. These will contribute to core funding alongside the revenue from schools, and the specific funding supporting that. There ius currently two years of funding from Garfield Weston supporting the core work, but further funding will be needed annually to sustain the

planned programme. The new post-holder will need to develop a funding strategy that is deliverable in the current climate.

The Play House currently has office space in Ladywood, in premises owned by Action For Children, and shared with a Nursery – Small Wonders. There is storage here too, some access to meeting rooms, and an arrangement with the neighbouring church, Ladywood Methodist Church is currently in place for rehearsal access.

About our Work

“After a workshop, children were independently playing a game outside where they were sharing feelings and pretending to put these into the well. It has genuinely struck a chord with our children."
Headteacher, Raddlebarn Primary School

“We have noticed a profound impact on the children’s ability to express themselves by using drama as a vehicle for communication. The sessions are interactive and inclusive of all abilities, needs and dispositions. As a school, we find the range of contexts for the sessions a key benefit, as they expose pupils to new learning experiences which has enriched our curriculum.”
Assistant Headteacher, Montgomery Primary Academy

“This is not just a bolt on, this is core to our PSHE, OWLS (our wider learning) curriculum.”
Headteacher, Colmore Junior School

“You had them entranced from the start, they were so enthralled!”
Teacher, St Catherine of Siena School

“...in terms of learning the Playhouse is gold dust.”
Rachel Gartside, Education Associate, Royal Shakespeare Company

Artists we have recently worked with include: Shu Wen Tung, Shaiek Ahmed, Lucy Bird, Mustafa Chaudhry, Sojourner Dawson, Adaya Henry, Philip Holyman, Charis McRoberts, Sabrina Naz Nabi, Arzhang Pezhman, Genevieve Say, Shane Shambhu and Ayeisha Siniara.

Organisations we have recently collaborated with include: Iris Bertz, Birmingham Conservatoire, Friends of Cotteridge Park, New Histories in Lye, University of Birmingham, University of Warwick, University of Worcester, West Smethwick Enterprise plus early years settings and primary schools across Birmingham.

Recent funders include: Arts Council England, Baron Davenport Trust, Birmingham City Council, Edward and Dorothy Cadbury Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston, SCOPS, John Feeney Charitable Trust, Paul Hamlyn, Roger and Douglas Charitable Trust, Royal Academy of Engineering, Sir Barry Jackson Trust, West Midlands Combined Authority and West Midlands Police.

Person Specification

We are not necessarily seeking someone who has extensive experience of all aspects of this job already. This is a time for the company to find someone to commit very fully to taking the company on over the next few years, someone with respect for the best traditions and achievements of the company, with antennae for new opportunities and partnerships, the instincts and understanding of the full potential of the work, and the passion, energy and commitment to drive the company deep into the next forty years.

Essential Experience and Knowledge

- Experience of delivering participatory, drama-led activities.
- Understanding of educational and community drama practice and theory.
- Experience of project management, fund-raising, board reporting, budget management and relationship-building.

Essential or Desirable Skills, Abilities and Attributes

- Ability to work independently and collaboratively.
- Strong Leadership skills.
- Knowledge of current developments in education, educational theatre and community theatre.
- Ability to initiate and respond to new developments.
- Ability to apply drama practices to a diverse range of social and educational agendas.
- Excellent communication skills – written and oral and with a wide range of people.
- Ability to develop excellent working relationships.
- Understanding of and commitment to EDI and to being an inclusive organisation.
- Excellent performance, communication and facilitation skills.
- Ability to make professional judgements requiring expertise and sensitivity.
- Ability to balance several projects at once and deliver all to a high standard.
- Ability to work under pressure and to deadlines.
- Understanding of fund-raising, marketing and promotion – grasp of the requirements of running a successful sustainable business.
- Commitment to the values and ethos of The Play House.
- Creative Connection with the Birmingham area



How to Apply

If you are interested in applying, please submit a CV and cover letter (no longer than 2 sides) or video or audio file (no longer than 5 minutes) highlighting your relevant experience and how you would approach the role to:

bally@theplayhouse.org.uk.

Please use the subject line 'Artistic Director Application' for your email and include a completed equal opportunities form.

The deadline for applications is:
12 p.m. Monday 14th December 2026

Interviews will be held:
18th December 2026 in Birmingham.

If you would like an informal chat to find out more before applying email Peter Wynne-Willson, our interim director at **director@theplayhouse.org.uk**

Equal Opportunities

The Play House is committed to inclusion and equal opportunities in the workplace and we actively encourage applicants from all backgrounds, of different ages, genders, social and economic backgrounds, ethnicities, religions and sexual orientations, and from people with and without disabilities. Please contact us should you have any access requirements or need any reasonable adjustments to be made in order to apply or attend an interview.

Our recruitment process is open to all, but we are particularly keen to hear from applicants who may have faced racism, discrimination and/or cultural barriers due to their ethnicity, disability or D/deafness, as these groups are currently underrepresented in our team and the wider theatre sector.

