

# MAKING

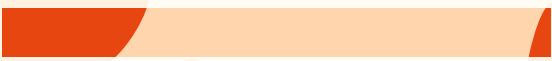
THE PEOPLE

THE SPACES

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THE DEVELOPMENTS



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**Circus and  
Outdoor Arts  
in the United Kingdom**

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THE POLICIES

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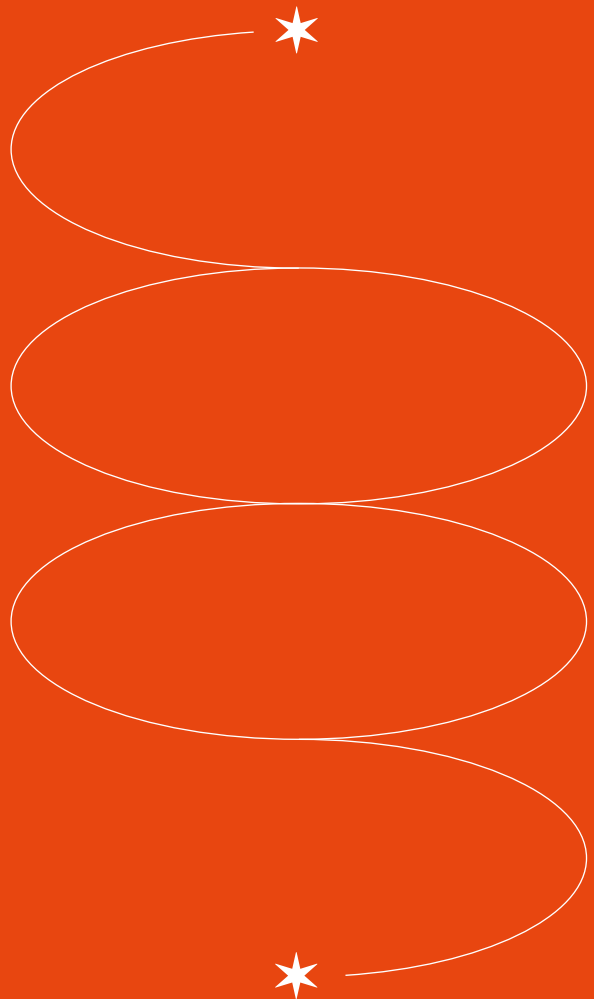
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# INTRODUCTION

**As we navigate the post-Brexit landscape, it's essential to understand the evolving dynamics of the sector. In 2021, the UK bid farewell to its membership in the European Union, prompting the creation of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR), designed to offer financial support to mitigate the challenges faced by European private companies and public authorities.**

**T**he BAR presented an opportunity for collaboration between the UK and Flanders. Brexit hasn't merely erected barriers; it has spurred us to explore innovative avenues for cooperation. As part of one of the three BAR projects coordinated by Circuscentrum, this brochure serves as a gateway into the intricacies of the UK circus and outdoor arts sector, tailored specifically for circus professionals.

Within these pages, you'll find a comprehensive overview of how the UK circus and outdoor arts ecosystem is structured, highlighting key players. Our aim is to foster stronger partnerships and enhance relations by offering deeper insight into the people, spaces, developments and the policies of the circus and outdoor arts sector in the UK. We would like to thank Verena Cornwall with whom we've worked together to create the content of this brochure.



# GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND BUDGETS IN THE UK

**THE UNITED KINGDOM** consists of four countries:



## FUNDING AGENCIES

The United Kingdom is overseen by four separate Arts Councils funded by their national governing bodies: Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England and Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Alongside money from national government, these bodies receive and distribute funds from the National Lottery. Typically core funds will be allocated to strategically significant companies – Regularly Funded Organisations – on an annual or multi-annual basis. Project funds will be available for time-limited initiatives.

Regionally, local councils (also known as local authorities) make autonomous decisions on how much of their own funds – raised principally through local tax – to commit to arts funding. Many local authorities employ arts development officers and some have a number of key staff whose focus includes delivery of arts events. Local authorities are also eligible to apply to their Arts Council for funding.

# CREATIVE SCOTLAND

→ Creative Scotland is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland on behalf of everyone who lives, works or visits there. Creative Scotland enables people and organisations to work in and experience the arts, screen and creative industries in Scotland by helping others to develop great ideas and bring them to life. Creative Scotland distributes funding from the Scottish Government and the National Lottery. The grant-in-aid budget for 2023/2024 is £63m. On Census Day, 20 March 2022, the size of the usual resident population of Scotland was estimated to be 5,436,600 people.

## Strategic Framework

Creative Scotland's remit is set out in Part 4 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, which describes the general functions of the funding body as:

- identifying, supporting and developing quality and excellence in the arts and culture from those engaged in artistic and other creative endeavours;
- promoting the understanding,

- appreciation and enjoyment of the arts and culture;
- encouraging as many people as possible to access and participate in the arts and culture;
- realising, as far as reasonably practicable to do so, the value and benefits (in particular, the national and international value and benefits) of the arts and culture;
- encouraging and supporting artistic and other creative endeavours which contribute to an understanding of Scotland's national culture in its broad sense as a way of life;
- promoting and supporting industries and other commercial activity, the primary focus of which is the application of creative skills.

## Current Funding Criteria:

1. quality and ambition
2. engagement
3. equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
4. environmental sustainability
5. fair work
6. international (optional: only for applications involving international activity)

## Creative Scotland Grant Funding (Supplied as part of a Freedom of Information request)

### Awarded to Circus/Outdoor Arts/Carnival

#### 2020/2021\*

Individuals	£ 29,709.00
Companies	£ 109,740
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 139,449</b>

#### 2021/2022

Individuals	£ 127,425
Companies	£ 355,369
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 482,794</b>

#### 2022/2023

Individuals	£ 88,710
Companies	£ 543,133
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 631,843</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£ 1,254,086</b>

\* Uses project start dates. Source of funding not known (Grant-Aid/Lottery)

## Creative Scotland Grant Funding (Supplied as part of a Freedom of Information request)

Name of Funding Programme (Where known)+	Awarded Amount 2020/2021	Awarded Amount 2021/2022	Awarded Amount 2022/2023
Open Fund (Individuals)	£ 36,629	£ 45,955	
Open Fund (Organisations)	£ 391,488		£ 311,575
Sector Development - Theatre	£ 10,500		
Theatre 22-23			£ 15,000
Hardship Fund for Creative Freelancers 2022	£ 4,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 442,617</b>	<b>£ 45,955</b>	<b>£ 326,575</b>
Funds Awarded +	Awarded Amount 2020/2021	Awarded Amount 2021/2022	Awarded Amount 2022/2023
Open Fund for Individuals		£ 54,870	£ 88,710
Youth Arts Access Fund		£ 29,558	
Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance			£ 128,700
Cancellation Fund for Creative Freelancers		£ 15,680	
Culture Organisations and Venues Recovery		£ 105,107	
Four Nations International Fund			£ 5,000
Recovery Fund for Cultural Organisations		£ 11,314	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 0</b>	<b>£ 216,529</b>	<b>£ 222,410</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£ 442,617</b>	<b>£ 262,484</b>	<b>£ 548,985</b>

+ Uses Fund Dates when indicated and where not, uses project start dates. Source of funding not known (Grant-Aid/Lottery)

## ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES

→ The Arts Council of Wales is an independent charity, established by Royal Charter in 1994. The Arts Council of Wales distributes funding from the Welsh Government and The National Lottery. The grant-in-aid budget for 2023/2024 is £33.3m. On Census Day, 21 March 2021, the size of the usual resident population in Wales was estimated to be 3,107,500 people.

### Strategic Framework

The Arts Council of Wales has an ambitious vision for the arts in Wales, and the strategy is to build a place where the funder can find, nurture and share the best talent. A key desired outcome across all the work

and investment of The Arts Council of Wales is for the arts to have a positive impact on the well-being of people in Wales. In addition to funding the arts, there are other key areas that the Arts Council of Wales supports including arts and health, education and young people, international work, and support for individual artists and creative freelancers.

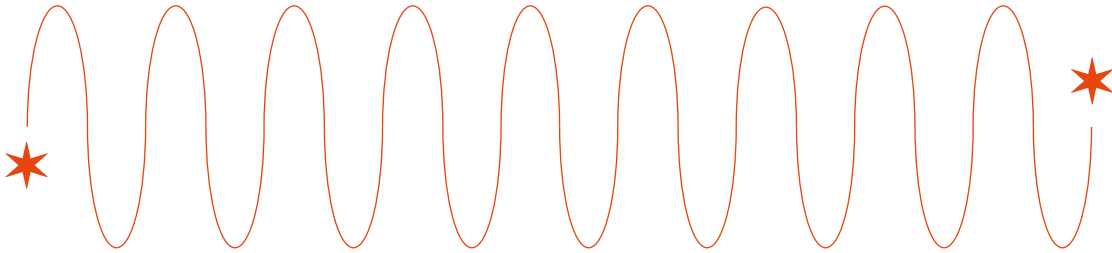
### Current Funding Principles:

1. creativity
2. widening engagement
3. Welsh language
4. climate justice
5. nurturing talent
6. transformation

## Arts Council of Wales Grant Funding (Supplied as part of a Freedom of Information request)

Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2020/2021*	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 70,008	£ 40,450	£ 29,558
Companies	£ 827,146	£ 588,754	£ 238,392
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 897,154</b>	<b>£ 629,204</b>	<b>£ 267,950</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2021/2022	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 6,080		£ 6,080
Companies	£ 323,341	£ 80,885	£ 242,456
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 329,421</b>	<b>£ 80,885</b>	<b>£ 248,536</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2022/2023	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 1,010		£ 1,010
Companies	£ 809,889	£ 238,108	£ 571,781
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 810,899</b>	<b>£ 238,108</b>	<b>£ 572,791</b>

\* Uses project start dates as application offer letter dates are not known



## Arts Council of Wales Split by Fund Types (Where Known)\*

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Arts Portfolio Wales			£ 199,700
Connect and Flourish	£ 163,930		£ 127,000
COVID-19 Cultural Recovery Funds	£ 723,244	£ 52,885	
Create		£ 248,536	£ 422,551
Create - Football World Cup 2022			£ 8,730
Creative Learning Recovery Fund		£ 3,000	
Go and See for Schools			£ 900
Gwyl Cymru			£ 3,500
International Opportunities Fund			£ 11,010
Strategic	£ 25,000		£ 15,102
WAI Strategic			£ 22,406
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 912,174.00</b>	<b>£ 304,421.00</b>	<b>£ 810,899.00</b>

\* Uses project start dates as application offer letter dates are not known

# ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

→ Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Arts Council England was established by Royal Charter on 13 March 1994, taking over those responsibilities in England previously discharged by the Arts Council of Great Britain. Arts Council England distributes funding from the English Government and The National Lottery. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) grant-in-aid budget for 2023/2024 was £401m, with an additional £246m funding from the Lottery. The DCMS income includes only unrestricted programme, capital and administration funds direct from DCMS. On Census Day, 21 March 2021, the size of the usual resident population in England was estimated to be 56,490,048 people.

## Strategic Framework

By 2030, Arts Council England wants England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.

Let's Create is the result of nearly two years of evidence-gathering and consultation with people working in

museums, libraries and arts organisations, the public, stakeholders and staff. The strategy centres around three outcomes:

- Creative people: everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
- Cultural communities: villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- A creative and cultural country: England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

## Current Funding Criteria:

There are four investment principles:

- Ambition and quality: cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work.
- Inclusivity and relevance: England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that we support and in the culture they produce.
- Dynamism: cultural organisations can thrive and are better able to respond to the challenges of the next decade.
- Environmental responsibility: cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to the climate emergency.

## Arts Council England Grant Funding (Supplied as part of a Freedom of Information request)

Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2020/2021 # Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 2,896,480	£ 49,552	£ 2,846,928
Companies	£ 10,849,149	£ 366,869	£ 10,482,280
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 13,745,629</b>	<b>£ 416,421</b>	<b>£ 13,329,208</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2021/2022 Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 4,622,627	£ 340,898	£ 4,281,729
Companies	£ 22,054,497	£ 1,850,740	£ 20,203,757
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 26,677,124</b>	<b>£ 2,191,638</b>	<b>£ 24,485,486</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2022/2023 Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 3,350,897		£ 3,350,897
Companies	£ 22,906,859	£ 5,855,315	£ 17,051,544
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 26,257,756</b>	<b>£ 5,855,315</b>	<b>£ 20,402,441</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£ 66,680,509</b>	<b>£ 8,463,374</b>	<b>£ 58,217,135</b>

# Uses Fund dates as dates are known. There are no Fund categories



# ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND

→ The Arts Council is the development agency for the arts in Northern Ireland, providing the main support for artists and arts organisations throughout the region through a range of funding opportunities. The Arts Council distributes public money and National Lottery funds to organisations and people who develop and deliver arts programmes across all of society. The vision is to ‘place the arts at the heart of our social, economic and creative life’. The baseline exchequer resource allocation for 2023/24 (excluding capital) is £9.682m. On Census Day, 21 March 2021, the size of the usual resident population in England was estimated to be 1,903,175 people.

## Strategic Framework

The Arts Council’s 5-year Plan supports the development of arts and culture, as well as demonstrating their critical role in supporting the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Executive in meeting their broader strategic objectives.

‘Inspire, Connect, Lead’ (Our Strategy | Arts Council NI [artscouncil-ni.org]), the five-year strategic framework for the

development of the arts in Northern Ireland, 2019–24, identifies the main themes covering what needs to be done to achieve this vision.

## Current Funding Criteria:

The three guiding principles of the current 5-year Plan are:

- Inspire: great art inspires us, nurtures our understanding of who we are and the world around us and brings us together.
- Connect: the arts are without boundaries. They connect communities, help build creative places, define a new sense of identity, and help us tell our stories, seek out and engage wider audiences. We want to reach out and reach further, bringing people together.
- Lead: we see our role as enabling and empowering the sector to achieve its ambitions and to speak out for the arts; but we won’t be able to do that alone — we will need to work together to deliver on this promise.

## Arts Council of Northern Ireland Grant Funding (Supplied as part of a Freedom of Information request)

Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2020/2021* Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 281,930	£ 256,756	£ 25,174
Companies	£ 910,335	£ 407,501	£ 502,834
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 1,192,265</b>	<b>£ 64,257</b>	<b>£ 528,008</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2021/2022 Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 35,994	£ 35,994	
Companies	£ 609,145	£ 106,946	£ 502,199
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 645,139</b>	<b>£ 142,940</b>	<b>£ 502,199</b>
Awarded to Circus/ Street Theatre/Carnival	2022/2023 Total	Split between: Exchequer	Split between: Lottery
Individuals	£ 23,612		£ 23,612
Companies	£ 735,340	£ 181,748	£ 553,592
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 758,952</b>	<b>£ 181,748</b>	<b>£ 577,204</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£ 2,596,356</b>	<b>£ 988,945</b>	<b>£ 1,607,411</b>

\* Uses project start dates as application offer letter dates are not known

## Creative Scotland

## Arts Council Wales

**Is there a government-level mandate, decree or similar that specifically requires the Arts Council to fund traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts including carnival?\***

There is no government-level mandate, decree or similar that specifically requires Creative Scotland to fund traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts and carnival. However, as a Non-departmental Public Body with the key role in delivering public funding to Scotland's cultural and creative sectors, Creative Scotland's remit and funding programmes includes these art forms

No, circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts including carnival is not referenced specifically. The mandate refers to the arts and culture sector in general and references considerations including climate change and increased access to opportunities in the arts for all through equality, inclusion and diversity.

**Does the Arts Council have a specific policy for funding traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts including carnival? \***

There is no specific policy for funding traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts and carnival, however these art forms fall within Creative Scotland's remit and are therefore supported across the funding programmes.

The Create Funding programme offers opportunities for organisations and individuals to apply to a number of grant rounds throughout the year. Circus, festivals and outdoor arts is a supported art form as per the published guidance. In the Investment Review 2023 Report and Decisions, published on 27 September 2023, positive developments in a range of art forms including circus are mentioned. The Report also recognises there is more to do and one of the proposed strategic interventions includes outdoor arts.

**Does the Arts Council have named staff who deal with funding of traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts including carnival? \***

Creative Scotland do not have a named member of staff who specifically deals with funding of traditional circus, contemporary circus, outdoor arts and carnival. Instead, support for these art forms fall within the remit of Creative Scotland's Theatre Team and there is a specific Theatre Officer with expertise in these art forms.

There are two full-time Portfolio Managers with a with a national remit each for circus and outdoor arts, who have sat within these roles for over 3 years.

**Does the Arts Council's application forms specifically list circus, outdoor arts including carnival as art forms that an applicant can select when applying for funding? \***

Currently Creative Scotland's application forms do not specifically list circus, outdoor arts and/or carnival as art forms. However, all application forms include the option to select 'other', allows applicants to specify the art form, if it is missing from the list.

Yes, applicants are asked to select the main focus of their work as one of the below: research and development · creation of work for presentation · programming, presenting and touring · festival · participation and community engagement · training and professional development · business development

Next, they are asked to use a percentage to indicate the proportion of the activity that relates to each art form as below: carnival, festival and circus · craft · dance · digital arts · drama · film · literature · music · opera · theatre · visual arts

\* Answers are applicable for the financial year 2023-2024

## Arts Council England

There are no government-level mandates, decrees or similar legislation that require Arts Council England to fund traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts including carnival.

In this present financial year, Arts Council England does not have a specific policy for the funding of traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts including carnival. Arts Council England classifies 'traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts including carnival' as part of the Combined Arts. There are no specific policies for the funding of any of the art forms. However, Combined Arts form an integral part of the Arts Council's definition of culture, which underpins the 10-year strategy Let's Create. The latest version of our delivery plan, outlining Let's Create, is available on the website [here](#).

In this present financial year, there are no specific staff members whose roles and responsibilities focus entirely on the funding and management of traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoors arts including carnival. In the past 3 financial years there have also been no specific staff members whose roles and responsibilities focus entirely on the funding and management of traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts. Within this financial year, as well as within the past 3 financial years, there have however been a number of part-time and full-time relationship managers, whose roles and responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, managing relationships with individuals and organisations whose work encompasses traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoors arts including carnival as part of the 'combined arts'. A relationship manager's remit is regional.

In this present financial year, applicants cannot select carnival, circus or outdoor as art forms to indicate that the focus of their activity is on this/these art forms. These are classifications the staff assign internally.

## Arts Council Northern Ireland

There is no government-level mandate, decree or similar that specifically requires the Arts Council to fund traditional circus, contemporary circus and/or outdoor arts including carnival.

The Arts Council does not have art form specific policies.

There is a named, full-time Arts Council staff member who deals with the funding of circus/street theatre/carnival, whose remit is NI-wide.

Yes, the Arts Council's application forms specifically list circus/street theatre/carnival as an art form that an applicant can select when applying for funding in order to be able to indicate that the focus of their activity is on this art form.

# CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS COMPANIES AND ARTISTS CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE UK

England is credited with inventing circus in 1768, and traditional tented touring circuses have flourished since this time, now primarily touring shows that include international performers. Contemporary circus began to develop in the 1970s and can now be found indoors and outdoors. Street arts, also known as outdoor arts, likewise started to develop in the 1970s. Contemporary companies are often supported by leading festivals through commissioning programmes. There are several outdoor arts companies who have been in existence for more than 30 years. Circus and outdoor arts performers often have more than one show as part of their repertoire and may contact festivals and promoters directly, undertaking their own administration. There are also established agents for outdoor arts performers.

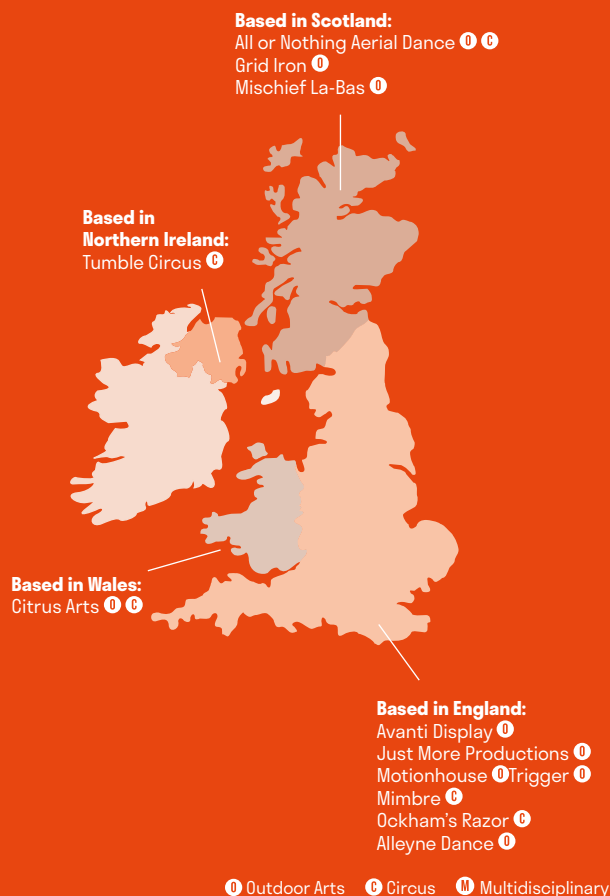
We can't include of full description of all of the companies that are active in the UK here, but you find a selection below. You can find a broader scope of artists and companies in online directories for artists, including:

NASA: [nasauk.org](http://nasauk.org)

Without Walls: [www.withoutwalls.uk.com](http://www.withoutwalls.uk.com)

Xtrax: [www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk)

Outdoor Arts UK: [www.outdoorartsuk.org](http://www.outdoorartsuk.org)



## SOME EXAMPLES

## JUST MORE PRODUCTIONS

England  
Outdoor Arts

→ Just More Productions is a community engagement company, using food, history and performance to educate and entertain. Just More Productions have a range of workshops and performances. The company thrive on bringing culture and

communities together. Their latest show is Fussy Foodies: Battle of the Pan, which is an interactive game show on food history, music, roots and culture. The show is a celebration of food, music roots, and culture: a kitchen party where the audience joins in on the fun. But don't get too comfortable, you'll have your part to play! The audience/contestants take part in the cooking and the games, with the number-one foodie 'Messy Mama T', who'll quiz you on your foodie knowledge, with a chance to win the grand prize! Fussy Foodies: Battle of the Pans is supported by Without Walls and commissioned by Certain Blacks, Norfolk & Norwich Festival and Just So Festival. The R&D for Fussy Foodies: The Battle of the Pans was supported by Blueprint: Without Walls R&D Investment Fund.

[www.justmoreproductions.com](http://www.justmoreproductions.com)



## MOTIONHOUSE

England  
Outdoor Arts

→ Founded in 1988 by Louise Richards and Kevin Finnan MBE, Motionhouse create world class dance-circus productions that tour extensively to rave reviews across the globe. From full-length productions for theatre touring to flexible work for the outdoors and large-scale performance events, their sell-out productions integrate athletic physicality, powerful narrative, incredible digital imagery and emotive sound scores. Their work takes its inspiration from common human concerns and our connection to the world in which we live, with recent works exploring

flooding, the pressure of time, fear and captivity, and our relationship with water, the Earth and energy. Motionhouse's dancers perform on stunning sets, with aerialists and singers, in incredible settings and to breath-taking effect. In everything the company does, they want to engage with people from all cultures and identities, and of all ages, including people who are underrepresented in the world of dance, circus and outdoor arts.

Motionhouse makes work about people, for people. Pioneers of outdoor dance, the company's flexible productions tour festivals and non-theatre spaces.

Motionhouse have secured a reputation as the go-to company to create visionary, large-scale outdoor events. The company have an enviable reputation for delivering an excellent education and training programme at their studio in Leamington Spa, throughout the UK and further afield. Motionhouse is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.motionhouse.co.uk](http://www.motionhouse.co.uk)



## TRIGGER

England  
Outdoor Arts



→ Trigger are Creators. Producers. Writers. Planners. Coordinators. Communicators. Activists and innovators. Trigger are shapeshifting creatives. The company dream up, create and produce bold and brave live events. They interrupt daily life, reimagine and revive public spaces, and put audiences and togetherness at the heart of everything the company does. Their work is accessible, inclusive and boundary pushing. It's always memorable, often large-scale and outdoors. Trigger create epic, imaginative spaces, fly giant dragons and grow magical pop-up gardens. Trigger's vision is brought to life by diverse teams of cross-disciplinary artists, academics and creatives and aims to shine a spotlight on the creativity of local communities. Trigger use their platform to showcase new, emerging, inspiring talent. When handed the microphone, the company

use it to highlight issues that are important to us all, even if they are difficult to navigate. Trigger is for everyone, and everyone is invited. The company have a number of productions in their current repertoire, including *The Hatchling* – a spectacular dragon that hatches from an egg, grows to the size of bus and flies from land over water. *The Hatchling* is a groundbreaking outdoor theatrical performance that unfolds over a weekend of events leading up to an extraordinary finale. *The Hatchling* led an array of cultural celebrations outside Buckingham Palace at the Platinum Jubilee Pageant in June 2022. *The Hatchling* in Plymouth was experienced by over 30,000 people over a weekend of special events, reaching an extraordinary finale over the coast. Trigger are funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation. [www.triggerstuff.co.uk](http://www.triggerstuff.co.uk)

## MIMBRE

England  
Circus



→ Membre was formed in 1999 by Emma Norin, Lina Johansson and Silvia Fratelli. Membre are a female-led producing company, creating delicate, breathtaking and highly-skilled acrobatic theatre for outdoor and unusual settings, touring nationally and internationally, with a strong digital presence. The company collaborates across the Creative Industries, as consultants and creators. Membre run a vibrant local youth programme and an Artist Development Programme for physical performers. The company use circus and movement innovatively as a physical language to illuminate human connections. Membre pull down barriers to reach beyond social, financial, and cultural boundaries and facilitate everyone's place within the arts. In all their work, the company aim to challenge gender stereotypes and promote a positive,

diverse and inclusive image of cis and trans women as well as non-binary people. Membre make at least two productions each year, including at least one tour, typically reaching around 20,000 live audiences. In the last five years, their digital reach has been 3.5m. Partners include Dior, the RSC, The Lowry, National Centre for Circus Arts, Garsington Opera, Greenwich + Docklands International Festival and Stockton International Riverside Festival. Membre's Artist Development Programme advances circus and leadership through professional development initiatives, artistic research and knowledge sharing. They focus on mid-career performers, women, non-binary artists and those from under-represented backgrounds. Membre are funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation. [www.membre.co.uk](http://www.membre.co.uk)

# SILVIA FRATELLI

Joint Artistic Director at Mimbre

## What excites you about the sector here at the moment?

In the last few years, we've seen real growth in the number of companies creating and performing outdoor work of great quality and relevance. It has been great to tour at various festivals in England and UK and be inspired and uplifted after watching a variety of productions of different styles, all pushing the level and quality as well as highlighting pertinent current issues, despite the current funding and touring challenges.

As a long-standing touring company, it's very important to meet and keep being inspired by other artists, as this has also helped us to forge new relationships and collaboration opportunities in more recent years, which all helped to enrich and develop our work in unexpected ways. We've been also excited at witnessing better representation in the outdoor arts: more productions have started working with diverse artists, although this is still a long journey where more infrastructure and support needs to be developed further.

One of our more exciting and rewarding projects has been the 2022 co-production with Daryl Beeton Company Look Mum, No Hands!, which has had great touring success for two years running (and more to come). The show and the collaboration with Daryl has been a steep learning curve into how to be more inclusive in our practice and has really helped us to shape the way we now think and plan for future productions and professional development opportunities.

Last, but not least, we've also seen many more festivals and festival networks springing up in England and the UK, which is a great sign that outdoor arts has been recognised as an important part of our cultural sector.



© Emily Nicholls

## What are the most important challenges here at the moment?

Brexit and the pandemic have put a real spanner in the works ... Outdoor arts companies have always relied on both national and international touring (especially at the European level) to make touring financially viable and to be able to offer performers more secure contracts.

With the extra costs and time required to now travel across the channel, many companies have experienced a reduction in the amount of work/touring potential. Being a very resilient industry, we have found ways to still collaborate and tour in Europe, but we haven't seen a return to the pre-Brexit levels of international gigs yet, which has created a noticeable gap in the income that touring brings.

Another current challenge we're facing is finding funding opportunities for bigger-scale shows. Having produced many small-to-medium-scale shows in the last 20 years, we feel that we have been 'boxed in' in this category, which has made fundraising and commissioning opportunities for the creation of a bigger-scale show trickier (we have one in the pipeline if we secure the funding ... ) Also, this has been linked to changes in funding structures at the national, regional and local level in the last few years, with many organisations and local authorities becoming more risk-averse and not willing to invest big chunks of money.

We are becoming more hopeful though, as after talking to a few producers (and indoor venues as well), it has become clearer that there's now a need for bigger-scale (UK-produced) shows, as the demand seems to be there again and booking international companies has become more difficult and expensive after Brexit.

It would be great to have the luxury of more time to research ideas without the pressure of a finished show (or to be able to have longer R&D periods before creation time), but often, the need of having to constantly generate an income makes this impossible. In an ideal world, a fundamental restructuring of the funding system would see companies having more paid time to develop and refine their practice, technically and artistically.

## OCKHAM'S RAZOR

England  
Circus



→ Ockham's Razor are a contemporary circus company who combine circus and visual theatre to make work that is arresting and entertaining. The company specialise in creating physical theatre on original equipment and create stories from the vulnerability, trust and reliance that exists between physical performers. Rather than paint the circus performer as a superhuman character capable of impressive feats, Ockham's Razor make work that draws on the human and the real, where the characters go through recognisable experiences, emotions and conflicts that the audience can relate to. Their shows are exciting and moving. The company feels that they have achieved their aims when members of the audience have said, 'I wanted

to come on stage with you'. The Company was formed in 2004 at Circomedia, Academy of Circus Arts and Physical Performance in Bristol. Ockham's Razor were the first British company to be funded by Jeunes Talents Cirque (now circusnext). In 2007 they premiered their first full-evening programme at the London International Mime Festival, to sell-out audiences. Since then, Ockham's Razor have performed in theatres and festivals throughout the UK and the world, establishing a reputation for innovative, emotive, accessible performances. Ockham's Razor are a partner company with The Lowry, Salford and arts depot, North Finchley and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk](http://www.ockhamsrazor.co.uk)

## ALL OR NOTHING AERIAL DANCE

Scotland  
Circus and Outdoor Arts

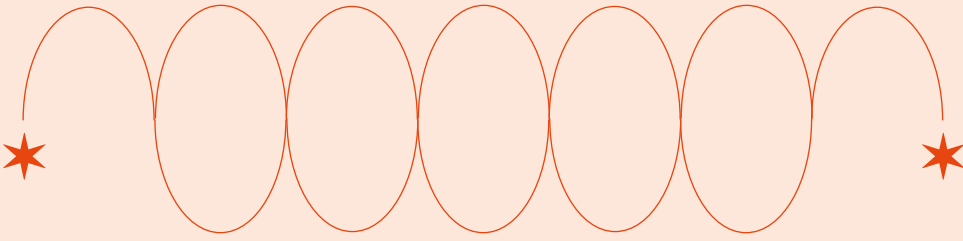
→ All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre are Scotland's leading aerial dance company, creating, performing, teaching and developing aerial arts throughout the country. Their work crosses the boundaries between the floor, air and the space between, merging aerial arts with dance theatre and contemporary circus. With performances ranging from small-scale theatre to large-scale outdoor spectacle, All or Nothing Aerial Dance tour

extensively across Scotland, creating their own theatrical works for touring as well as developing aerial elements for events. Over the past two years the company completed a 37-venue tour with their outdoor work for families The Swings. Part performance and part installation, The Swings is both an aerial dance duet and an open invitation for the public to swing high and free. Much of All or Nothing Aerial Dance's work encompasses outdoor and large-scale spectacle. They have hung from cranes for the award winning Paisley Halloween Festival, flown through the trees in the outdoor sound and light shows Enchanted Forest and Archerfield's Christmas Fairy Trail, and danced down iconic buildings such as the Glasgow Science Centre for Cryptic's Sound to Sea, Princes Street for Edinburgh's Hogmanay, the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle and, a company favourite, Celtic Connections' Bothy Culture and Beyond with the Grit Orchestra and Danny MacAskill. All or Nothing Aerial Dance are funded by Creative Scotland.

[www.aerialdance.co.uk](http://www.aerialdance.co.uk)







# JENNIFER PATERSON

Artistic Director at All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre



© Sean Perrier

**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

It's hard to say what the current trend is in Scotland in terms of work that artists are creating. We are working in aerial and the scene is small but a strong one and very diverse in style. Aerial is more popular, and spinning hoop is definitely popular.

**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

I am excited about the growth of aerial and circus in Scotland as well as the outdoor sector, and the potential it all has. Firstly, there are more artists creating and working here with a circus background, some of whom have developed shows with great success here and internationally. There was

very little around here in Scotland when we first started so it's exciting to see that growth and have more of a community of artists developing. It is still not the same size as England, Wales or the rest of Europe but encouraging nonetheless.

Outdoor work was given more of a focus during the pandemic and there is potential for this focus to stay and grow. Festivals such as Paisley Halloween festival, artists such as Adrenalism, Mischief La-Bas and Megahertz are all creating great work outdoors, often with the local communities they work in.

Overall, in Scotland there is a lot of cross-fertilisation between performance art forms – theatre, dance, circus – and so that generates a lot of potential in where and how circus is seen and developed and how artists work together.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

The funding cuts, the cost of living crisis here, the threat to cultural infrastructure due to local authorities having no money. This is overall to the arts in Scotland (and wider in the UK). Here in Scotland, circus and outdoor arts are not embedded in the cultural landscape in the same way that theatre and music are, so there is more of a fight to explain our value and the importance of outdoor arts to society. There is no official circus or outdoor arts officer within the arts council (Creative Scotland).

## GRID IRON

Scotland  
Outdoor Arts



© Jess Shure & Ryan Buchanan

→ Grid Iron is a multi-award winning, Edinburgh-based new-writing theatre company. The company specialises in creating site-specific and location theatre and also produces work for the stage. Since their beginnings in 1995, Grid Iron has received 31 awards and many more nominations covering all aspects of work, from acting, writing, design and use of music to stage management and technical expertise. Grid Iron's adventures have taken them to extraordinary places: from the slopes of Edinburgh Zoo to a boat-builders island in a Norwegian fjord, the former General Security building in Beirut, landslide and airside at Edinburgh airport and

parks, housing estates, playgrounds and bars all over Scotland and Britain. Internationally, Grid Iron have had two European Capital of Culture commissions, for Cork 2005 and Stavanger 2008, delivered an extensive programme of work for the British Council in the Middle East, appeared three times as part of Edinburgh International Festival, many times at Edinburgh Festival Fringe and performed as part of Imagine, Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh International Science Festival and during Cork's Fringe (now Midsummer) Festival and the Belfast Festival at Queens. Grid Iron are funded by Creative Scotland.

[www.gridiron.org.uk](http://www.gridiron.org.uk)



## MISCHIEF LA-BAS

Scotland  
Outdoor Arts



→ Established in 1992 by the now-late Ian Smith and Angie Dight, Mischief La-Bas deliver surprise, humour and imaginative engagement in their outdoor performances. Their mission to 'gently warp the underlay of the fabric of society' has been developed over twenty years by successfully producing strange but accessible work in a multitude of environments, almost invariably to the public in public places.

They welcome commissions for one-off events and mid-to-large-scale outdoor theatrical experiences. The company has a wide repertoire and most acts can be described as roving or walkabout entertainment with performers interacting directly with the public. The Fan-Families add puppetry into the mix, whilst The Scone of Destiny combines dancing and baking with a giant and ancient scone. All the acts engage directly with the public through humour or are highly visual. Thanks to funding from Creative Scotland, the Company has developed a new project, The Magnificent Organ, which combines music, comedy, acrobatics and kinetic sculpture in a 30-minute show suitable for touring small-to-medium-sized outdoor spaces. Mischief La-Bas welcome commissions for one-off events and mid-to-large-scale outdoor theatrical experiences. Mischief La-Bas are funded by Creative Scotland.

[www.facebook.com/mischiefabas/](https://www.facebook.com/mischiefabas/)



# ANGIE DIGHT

Artistic Director at Mischief La-Bas



**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

In recent years the arts have been increasingly funded to deliver community-engaged practice. The arts and artists are being asked to fulfil roles which they may not be skilled in, or which take resources away from artistic content and quality of the work. Perhaps too the community audiences are not experiencing the work in the same way either and too much is being asked of them. I feel that by its very nature, interactive street art creates a collaboration with the public, that they can choose to play with or not. They can co-create with you in the moment and that's what brings the magic. This is true of many art forms, so it feels as if our skills and what we can offer are undervalued because data is harder to record. Most recently though,

I've begun to see a return in indoor theatre to unusual, idiosyncratic and highly creative solo shows, which have been very well received, so hopefully we will begin to see more creative and artistic works being supported across the board in the near future which will allow creativity to flourish once again.

**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

Over the last few years in Scotland, outdoor arts have become increasingly recognised, younger artists and venues have been developing work. Its early days still, but this better understanding of outdoor, public engagement work and an appreciation of what it takes to deliver in terms of resources, skills and time will benefit the sector for the future.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

Unfortunately there is a huge squeeze on resources across the UK and the arts is a very low priority for the UK government. Without enough resources, our arts funding bodies are being stretched, and artists, creatives, companies, organisations, venues, councils and festivals etc are struggling. We are still dealing with the aftermath of Brexit, the Pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, the art scene in Scotland has not yet recovered from any of these. In terms of outdoor arts, although it has become more recognised in Scotland, there are fewer and fewer opportunities available to artists to bring their work, there are also far less commercial clients than a decade ago.

## AVANTI DISPLAY

England  
Outdoor Arts

→ Avanti Display produce and present a highly individual brand of comic outdoor theatre across the UK and beyond. In their work, the company try to entertain the audience whilst taking them somewhere they have never been. Over the years, Avanti Display have presented their shows in twenty-one countries on four continents. They are one of the UK's longest-established outdoor performance companies, having created over twenty original shows.

Collaboration is at the heart of what the company does. For each project, Avanti Display like to bring together a bespoke team of artists and designers. Their latest show, *Crow* (2023), features new compositions from Seaming To, Lou Glandfield and George Khan. These new works formed a starting point for the devising process, creating the atmosphere and informing the structure. Music both features in and underscores the work, creating atmosphere and punctuating action. There is minimal text. The show is both comic and beautiful. *Crow* is an evening performance set at twilight, with engaging activity during the day. *Crow* is supported by Without Walls and commissioned by Stockton International Riverside Festival. The R&D for *Crow* was supported by Blueprint: Without Walls R&D Investment Fund. Supported by Bath Fringe (Bedlam Fair) Support for Try Out in 2021.

[avantidisplay.co.uk](http://avantidisplay.co.uk)



## ALLEYNE DANCE

England  
Outdoor Arts

→ Over the last 7 years, Alleyne Dance has established itself as one of the UK's foremost innovative dance companies in the world, striving for high quality and excellence as they deliver their two main objectives: Performance and Participatory work. Alleyne Dance has been developing their distinct presence as artistic directors, choreographers, and performers. As teachers they have built a clear identity and physical

language, but also as identical twins, they have a way of working and communicating that leans heavily on familial connectivity. Within Alleyne Dance choreographic construct, they create thematic pieces inspired by life experiences delivered in an abstract narrative. Stylistically they incorporate their knowledge and training in West-African, Caribbean, Kathak, Hip Hop and Circus Skills within a contemporary dance context. Alleyne Dance has a passion to share their craft around the world to touch and inspire people globally of all ages and cultures. In addition to creating and touring shows, the company runs The Alleyne Dance Mentorship Programme, an online programme that supports the professional development of early-career dance artists as they navigate their career paths. The mentorship programme seeks to offer a holistic approach that includes practical learning, sharing of knowledge as well as guidance to help inspire and encourage artists.

[www.alleynedance.com](http://www.alleynedance.com)



# SADÉ AND KRISTINA ALLEYNE

Co Artistic Directors, Choreographers  
& Performers at Alleyne Dance Company

## What excites you about the sector here at the moment?

We are excited that more people are looking to dance for entertainment. Our company is expanding and we are creating more work that is about important subject matters, which are understandable and relatable. We are excited to bring dance to communities and share our passion. We both were introduced to dance through outdoor performances. We are excited that we are maybe the inspiration to bring the next generation to this art form.

## What are the most important challenges here at the moment?

The most challenging is to receive funding in the UK to allow our projects to happen. Venues, organisations, and festivals do not

receive enough money to programme small to mid-scale companies like Alleyne Dance. The work is celebrated once being shown, as a Company we need to strategize ways to get the work to be performed.



© Camilla Greenwell

# TUMBLE CIRCUS

Northern Ireland  
Circus



→ On 1 April 1995, at about 2pm-ish on Grafton Street, Tina Segner and Ken Fanning met and juggled with each other for the first time. That was how Tumble Circus started and it is now an international award-winning circus company based in Belfast. Tumble Circus are Ireland's only non-traditional Big Top touring circus. Tumble Circus is run from caravans, hotel rooms and a Ford Transit van. The company are pioneers and trailblazers in the evolution of Irish circus. They have performed at arts and street festivals around Ireland and Europe. The company have headlined Glastonbury Festival's Circus Big Top, played at Edinburgh Fringe, Perth Fringe World, Adelaide

Fringe Festival, and have been seen in Norway, Iceland, Canada and many other countries. Their tented Winter Circus season in Belfast has become a yearly fixture and sell-out over the three weeks that it runs. Winter Circus is high-skill, all-human and all-thrill circus featuring death-defying aerialists, hardcore acrobats and mind-bending jugglers. Tumble Circus have created unique circus films, which are watched by thousands worldwide. The company have won awards for their circus shows, films, and directing. 'Forget what you think Irish circus is, and give you and your family one hammer-smashing experience of revolutionary Circus.'

[www.tumblecircus.com/](http://www.tumblecircus.com/)



# CITRUS ARTS

Wales  
Circus and Outdoor Arts

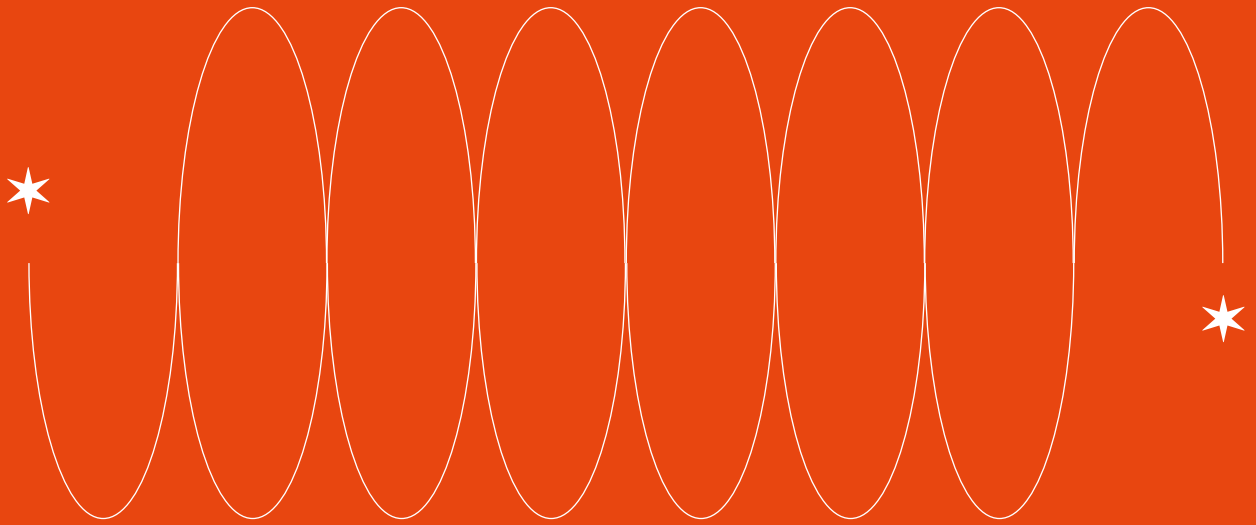
→ For over ten years Citrus Arts have been making highly physical and visual performances that combine circus, theatre and dance. Their shows are performed with local communities and also at events, venues and festivals across the UK. Citrus Arts explore how high production values placed on narrative, music, and visual arts support physical spectacle in original

performance. The company also run workshops and activities from their home in Hopkinstown Hall, as well as creating collaborative events in the local woods, country parks and housing estates in Rhondda Cynon Taff. Their latest show is Circle of Fifths, an immersive theatre experience directed by Butetown film- and theatre-maker Gavin Porter. Created with a collective of musicians and artists, and real-life stories from people across Wales, the show combines film, music and theatre to create a live documentary. Circle of Fifths explores how music and stories can connect us in times of grief and loss, allowing a moment of collective reflection and celebration. First presented in 2022 in Cardiff, Circle of Fifths returns in autumn 2023 touring venues across Wales and also coming to London. Citrus Arts is in receipt of funding from The Arts Council of Wales.

[www.citrusarts.co.uk](http://www.citrusarts.co.uk)



# TENTED CIRCUS



There are 25 members of the Association of Circus Proprietors of Great Britain, each presenting traditional circus productions on tour or in a venue in the UK and Republic of Ireland. These include circuses presenting animals (domestic) and human-only performances. Of these, two are historical circus buildings that offer traditional-style circus performances: the Blackpool Tower Circus and the Hippodrome Circus in Great Yarmouth. There are three contemporary circus companies in the UK that present work in tents at some point during the year.

The traditional touring circuses range in size from 400-seat tents to larger operations within excess of 1,000 seats. A larger show might be seen by more than 250,000 people each year

and will tour for at least 40 weeks. The touring season for traditional circuses is from February to November. Traditional circuses usually tour with a different repertoire of artists each year, often primarily employing a series of international artists. Some, such as Tom Duffy's Circus based in Northern Ireland, may have family members as the mainstay of the show, augmented by contracted artists. Due to the touring nature of circus, in some locations the show will be the only live performance audience members see that year. Traditional circuses successfully attract multi-generational audiences. Contemporary circus companies touring in tents may retain cast members on contract to deliver different shows created by their artistic director each year.

## NOFIT STATE

Wales  
Circus

© Mark J. Robinson



→ NoFit State was founded in 1986 by five friends. During a politically charged time, in a recession, and as a creative reaction to the world around them, the circus was born. Thirty years since its humble beginnings, NoFit State still believes that the total outweighs the sum of the parts. The company lives together, works together, eats together, laughs and cries together – travelling in trucks, trailers and caravans and living and breathing as one community. This is what creates the spirit that is NoFit State and gives the work its heart and soul. Contemporary circus combines live music, dance, stage design, text and film with traditional circus skills. It is rooted in the travelling

community, who turn up, pitch a tent, drum up an audience and then leave with only flattened grass and a memory to show they were ever there. Today, NoFit State is the UK's leading large-scale contemporary circus company, producing professional touring productions and a wide variety of community, training and education projects for people of all ages. Over the last ten years, NoFit State's touring productions have visited 19 different countries, played to audiences of over 460,000, as well as receiving critical acclaim and winning numerous prestigious international arts awards. NoFit State is in receipt of funding from The Arts Council of Wales.

[www.nofitstate.org](http://www.nofitstate.org)

## TOM DUFFY'S CIRCUS

Northern Ireland  
Circus

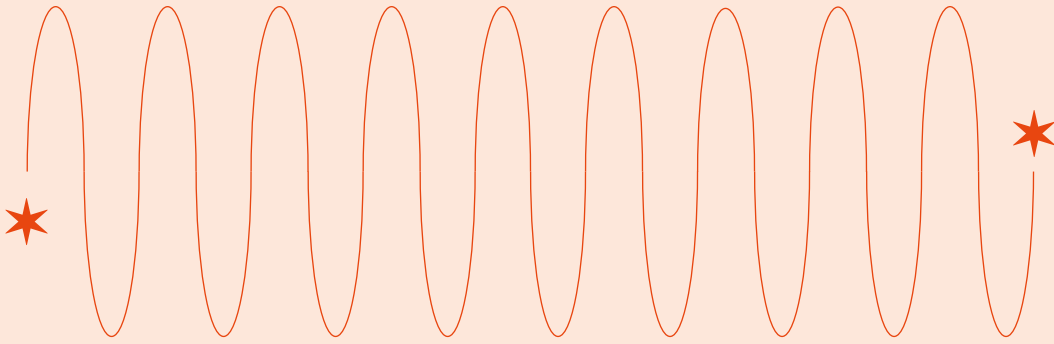
→ Tom Duffy's Circus has, over the years, become an Irish institution. Each touring season, Tom Duffy's Circus are fortunate to bring the highest quality, world-class performers to Ireland to join them on tour as the circus visits many of the cities and towns both in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The 2023 show includes performers from all around the globe, hailing from far-flung lands such as Brazil, the Netherlands, Mexico, Ukraine, as well as the Great Britain and closer to home with the Duffy

brothers. Duffy's Circus story began over two centuries ago with Patrick James Duffy, a circus acrobat from Dublin, Ireland, when he established his own circus. In 2022 the company sadly lost their namesake Tom Duffy (Senior), who was born in Limavady, Northern Ireland, but his legacy continues with his son and grandsons, who are very much active in keeping the elements of traditional circus alive whilst incorporating modern twists and technology. Tom Duffy (Junior) and Jamie are quite literally a whirlwind duo. Complete concentration, balance, absolute trust in each other and a fearless mentality combine to produce a heart-stopping performance on the Wheel of Death. Jamie is one of only a handful of people in the world to perform a forward somersault on the outside of the wheel. The brothers recently beat many world-class acts to win the prestigious gold award the Grand Prix Der Artisten in Hannover. Tom Duffy's Circus is in receipt of funding from the Arts Council of the Republic of Ireland.

[www.duffyscircus.com](http://www.duffyscircus.com)







## TOM RACK

### Artistic Director at NoFit State (Wales)

**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

A lot of work is being created for theatres and the theatre audience. Whilst diversifying the market has to be a good thing, many (mostly young) artists feel the need for storytelling expressing themselves in their work and make issue-based, autobiographical content. They assume the audience will automatically care and be interested but without adequate investment, development time and ambition, this isn't always the case. Issue-based introspective projects might sound great on a funding application but present a danger of perpetuating mediocrity and turning off an audience from contemporary circus.



**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

The Circus Village project was an exciting project. We had four Big Tops up for six weeks and offered a programme of workshops, masterclasses and residencies with directors. In addition, five artists or companies had a creative residency and an opportunity to develop work.

The whole project culminated in a public-facing, three-day festival with a wide range of shows, 'sharings' of new work and activities. The Circus Village was supported by the Arts Councils of England and Wales and Creative Scotland and was free to attend.

There is a dearth of ongoing development opportunities for UK artists, and those that do exist normally come at considerable cost. Because the Village was free to attend with expenses, childcare and access costs covered, we were able to move beyond the white, affluent, middle-class stereotype that is perpetuated so much in our industry. The Circus Village was more than just classes; it brought the circus community together, relationships were forged and networks built. The programme was provocative and designed to challenge practices and (hopefully) expand aspirations and levels of ambition. Evaluation and feedback has shown that people found the project transformative.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

The UK arts funding landscape is very bleak and getting bleaker. For example, we fail to see how another Circus Village project can get funded in this environment and how work of quality and scale can be made.

We only have two circus schools within the four nations and no sectorial body charged with ongoing development and advocacy of the sector. There needs to be a strategy for the development of the quality of work that is made and the robustness of the sector. The UK is still behind the European curve in terms of resourcing, infrastructure, quality, opportunities ... and if we are to catch up and provide opportunities for UK practitioners and companies, greater investment is needed.

# ZIPPOS CIRCUS

England  
Circus

→ Zippos Circus is a household name, voted Britain's Best Circus and renowned as Scotland's Favourite Circus. Zippos Circus was established by Martin Burton in 1986. From modest beginnings, the circus is now one of the largest circuses in England. With acts from across the world, Norman Barrett MBE presented his famous budgerigar act in Zippos Circus when he was Ringmaster from 2004 to in 2021. Previously, Zippos Circus Academy offered the first ever qualification for circus in the UK. The all-new 2024 production "Magnificent!" directed by David Hibling sees brand new routines

from firm favourites within the Zippo core company whilst introducing new guest stars in a magnificent show that will delight and thrill family audiences. The versatile acrobat and comedy star Paulo Dos Santos from Brazil is the host, joined by South America aerial maestro Alex Michael, Ukrainian female clown La Loka who is exceptionally talented, the mighty Mongolian Warriors present a fast-paced springboard act and Zippos Motor-Bikers return with new surprises within the Globe of Thrills. Zippos Circus has been in receipt of funding from Arts Council England.

[www.zippos.co.uk](http://www.zippos.co.uk)



# GIFFORDS CIRCUS

England  
Circus

→ Nell Gifford: ‘Our costumes are handmade. Our animals are trained by us. Our sets are painted in the barns on our farm. We burn the midnight oil to conjure new visions for the show. It’s all we do. Circus is our job, our life, our love.’

Giffords Circus is a magical village-green circus that tours England from the first days of spring to the first glimpse of winter. It’s a hymn to homemade fun, excess and benign disruption. Giffords Circus want the show to move something in audiences and to take just a little while to recover from. Gypsy violinists, tap dancers, tight-rope walkers, trapeze artistes, stunt riders, opera singers, magicians, illusionists, gymnasts have all inhabited Giffords Circus. Giffords Circus is what everyone would like to find if they were driving along a road: a glimpse of the tent with the words ‘Giffords Circus’ shining from the

top, appearing mysteriously where it wasn’t the day before and might not be tomorrow. Travel back to your childhood and move forwards surrounded by music, loved ones and laughter. Established by the late Nell Gifford and her partner Toti Gifford in 2000, since 2012 Giffords Circus have worked with comedy director Cal McCrystal. As determined as ever to delight, for 2024 Giffords Circus will weave together a cast of acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns from all over the world in a show that will combine poetry, music and performing arts all set on the mythical island of AVALON. Come to Giffords Circus and be a part of the magic. Because, as Nell would say, ‘art is love’.

[www.giffordscircus.com](http://www.giffordscircus.com)

# THE REVEL PUCK CIRCUS

England  
Circus

→ The Revel Puck Circus is a new-circus company who create fresh circus for a new audience. Founded in 2018 in East London, they are a young and dynamic company who are striving to do and to see circus differently. The company’s work is based on the principle that to create work of universal appeal does not mean a sacrifice of artistic integrity or dramaturgical depth. It is possible to make work that is both poignant and joyful, that can resonate deeply, whilst bringing joy and laughter to the faces of all. The Revel Puck Circus are incredibly passionate about ensuring that what the company does is of real benefit to local communities. From their creative output of exceptional circus – accessible to people of all ages from all backgrounds – to their community engagement

programmes. Their mission is revolutionise the sector and to redefine the public perception of circus. The company’s big top is their home and with it they land in the heart of communities far and wide, inviting them into The Revel Puck Circus world and having the privilege to be a part of theirs. The diversity of the voices in the company and their collaborative approach is fundamental to the company’s ethos. The Revel Puck Circus work in partnership with local authorities, private developers and regional theatres to bring their fully autonomous venue to sites and spaces outside of traditional performance settings to activate an area and community through vibrant live performances and local partnerships. The Revel Puck Circus has been in receipt of funding from Arts Council England.

[www.revelpuckcircus.com](http://www.revelpuckcircus.com)

# FESTIVALS PROGRAMMING CIRCUS AND OUTDOOR ARTS

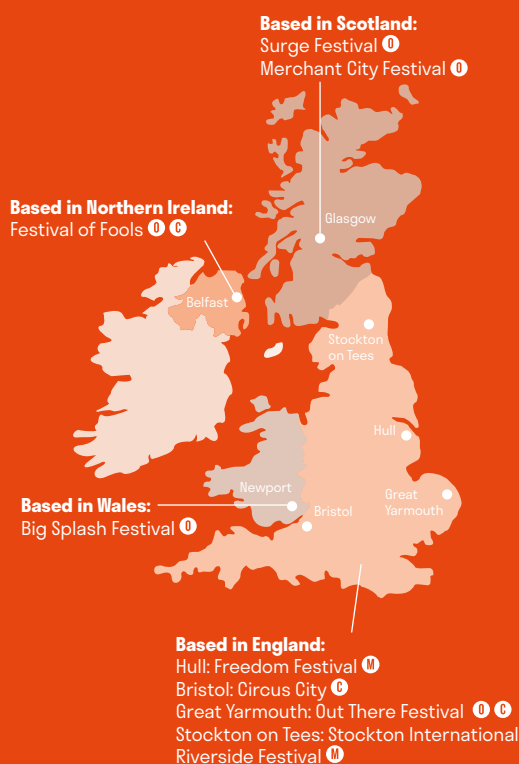
There is a wide range of multidisciplinary festivals programming outdoor arts and circus and taking place in different locations across the four countries throughout the year. Some festivals, such as Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF), mainly programme outdoor arts work. Circus City, Bristol's biennial circus festival, is the only dedicated circus festival.

There are different models of festivals, with some festivals supporting emerging and established companies through commissioning programmes and others programming work that has already been created. The London International Mime Festival – an annual festival of physical theatre, which ran from 1977 to 2023 – frequently supported circus in their sell-out programme, including offering London premieres of work by circusnext artists. Glastonbury Festival has, since the 1970s, been both a host and later a commissioner of circus and outdoor arts performances. Winchester Hat Fair, the longest-running street theatre festival in England, was one of the first organisations to offer outdoor arts commissions in the 1980s.

Without Walls Consortium is the largest collective body of festivals in the UK, offering a

range of professional support opportunities to outdoor arts and circus companies.

Read about some of the Consortium festivals below:



## CIRCUS CITY

Bristol, England  
Circus

→ Circus City is the UK's biennial festival of Circus Arts. Based in Bristol, UK, the first Circus City festival was co-founded by Kate Hartoch and Lina B Frank in 2015. The festival runs over three weeks in the autumn and reaches an average audience of 5,000 people with around 80 events. The programme includes 'sharings' of new work, platforms for local performers,

national and international companies. Circus City mainly presents work indoors but has had a free or very affordable outdoor programme each year. As well as the public-facing programme, the festival includes workshops, discussions, presentations and a nationally significant circus conference. Circus City also seed-fund new performances and are involved in research projects. The festival is a distribution partner of the European circus label circusnext. Participating venues range from Circomedia and Unit 15 to Tortworth Arboretum, Arnolfini, the Wardrobe Theatre, 1532 Theatre and the Redgrave Theatre. The 2023 programme offered rich and varied shows of physical storytelling, spectacle, research-driven performance-making, punk gig-circus and queer, neurodiverse and Black-led solo shows. Circus City is funded by Arts Council England using National Lottery funds.

[www.bristolcircuscity.com](http://www.bristolcircuscity.com)



© Yoda/Anadolu Agency

## FREEDOM FESTIVAL (FREEDOM FESTIVAL ARTS TRUST)

Hull, England  
Multidisciplinary

→ Freedom Festival Arts Trust bring thousands of people together through their annual festival and year-round artistic and creative programme of performances, installations, talent development programmes and targeted participatory work. They seek to excite, inspire, challenge, empower and provoke. Not only do they produce Hull's famous Freedom Festival, the organisation supports artists year-round, works within UK and international networks and produces other staple work and projects in Hull's cultural calendar. Freedom Festival Arts Trust celebrates Hull's independent spirit and extraordinary heritage, working

closely with artists, creative organisations, the private sector, academic partners, third-sector organisations, families, individuals, and community groups to deliver year-round creative activity and a world-class annual arts festival. The organisation believes it is important to generate and nurture new ideas, so they are passionate about supporting artists to develop ideas and reinvent art forms. Support is offered to people from all walks of life to explore the arts as the Trust believes that the arts are central to the well-being of our society. Freedom Festival Arts Trust is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.freedomfestival.co.uk](http://www.freedomfestival.co.uk)

## OUT THERE FESTIVAL

Great Yarmouth, England  
Outdoor Arts and Circus

→ Perched on the east coast, closer to the continent than the capital, Out There has established an international reputation for its exceptional, innovative and diverse programme. Regularly attracting more than 60,000 people to Great Yarmouth each year. Breathtaking spectacle and quirky comedy combine in a festival woven through with quality performance, family-friendly atmosphere and more than a fair dose of seaside silliness! Out There has quickly built a national and international reputation for world-class artistic quality, new and diverse work, regional artistic talent, international

collaboration and innovative community engagement. But all you need to know is Out There is just about the most amazing way to spend a day – and you don't have to spend any money. Young Out There offers inspirational experiences and creative activity for, with and by local young people at schools, colleges and youth groups to meet and collaborate with international artists, express their creativity and showcase their talent as part of Out There Festival. Out There Arts is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.outtherearts.org.uk/out-there-festival](http://www.outtherearts.org.uk/out-there-festival)

## STOCKTON INTERNATIONAL RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL (SIRF)

Stockton on Tees, England

→ Every August, Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) transforms the town into a theatrical feast of fun and wonder, with hundreds of colourful and exciting performances. Be prepared to be intrigued, entertained, puzzled, moved and made to laugh out loud. In 2017 the festival celebrated its 30th year, helping to cement its position as one of the world's oldest and best international outdoor art festivals. It attracts international artists

who perform to thousands of spectators each year, showcasing outstanding international street theatre, dance, circus and music acts with a packed programme of shows for all the family. The first Stockton International Riverside Festival was held in August 1988. Seeking inspiration from European festivals in the Netherlands, France and Spain, SIRF soon became an outdoor art spectacular with a focus on international performers and companies. Since mid-1990s, Arts Council England has increased their support of large outdoor festivals and street theatre companies in the UK, which has benefitted not only SIRF but also the English artists and performers the festival works with. SIRF also provides a platform for community projects with our popular carnival procession, which is an integral part of SIRF that brings together professional artists and local community groups to create a vibrant showcase parade through the heart of Stockton. SIRF is organised by Stockton Borough Council and supported by Arts Council England.

[www.sirf.co.uk](http://www.sirf.co.uk)



# JULIET HARDY

artistic director at Stockton International  
Riverside Festival (England)

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## What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?

I feel circus is something that can bring great impact and a wow factor to audiences. I feel, for this reason, we are seeing more and more shows that have classic circus skills. There has been a wave of having much contemporary dance on our streets and some companies have begun to incorporate more circus within their work. I feel there is a lack of new walkabout work and classic street theatre shows which have the potential to engage with audiences in the most magical, informal, intimate and unique ways.

## What excites you about the sector here at the moment?

One of the key things at the moment is the range of spaces, organisations and places presenting outdoor work. I have seen an increase in outdoor work being presented across the UK from local authorities to Creative People and Places projects across the UK. This is in turn making experiencing street arts more accessible. I do feel often this work is smaller and lighter in tone, however, it is evolving the sector for audiences to be familiar and more able to identify that our streets and public spaces are for arts as well as inside the four walls of a theatre, gallery or museum.

## What are the most important challenges here at the moment?

Some of the biggest challenges we face as a sector are to make work that is of scale. Over the last two years there has been a huge increase in production costs, which has impacted the delivery of outdoor work significantly. These costs are essential for safety and

large-scale events, ranging from site costs, such as toilets, fencing, security and equipment, to artistic production elements, such as lighting, staging and audio. Artists are tasked with not only making a brilliant show with an idea that will connect, challenge and engage audiences but also a show that is low-cost, portable, affordable and with a low carbon impact. This is a lot to consider as ingredients for a show. My concern is that within all of these conditions for making, somewhere along the line, are we losing the art? Street arts for me have always been about taking risks, having an element of peril and a way to place critical subjects that comment on the world in which we live in front of people. Funding requirements and restrictions and all the above considerations are at risk of dampening this function of street arts and in a climate where we need to make a statement that can start change, taking a risk is increasingly harder.

# JOE MACKINTOSH

CEO and artistic director  
at Out There Arts (England)

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## What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?

To secure funding, commissions or gigs, artistic companies often seem to feel obliged to make work about current issues such as climate change or identity. Without Walls has an over-dominant role in touring for outdoor arts and many companies feel that if they are not in this then there is little market left for them. International collaboration post-EU-funding has fallen off a cliff in comparison to the UK/FR Interreg

Programme days. Artists (especially emerging companies) are relying too heavily on ACE funding for creation to live, with a scarcity in volume of UK gigs, and are having to turn over new projects or creations too frequently in order to be receiving subsidy. It would be better if more of this subsidy was put into gigs rather than creation – higher public benefit and raising of quality standards. Participatory aspects to performances are a growing trend, not just in UK but more broadly.

## What excites you about the sector here at the moment?

Overall, I think it's quite a challenging and difficult time for the sector on many levels but there are a few glimmers of positivity, including:

- the expansion in recent years of outdoor arts activity through the CPP programme and a growing recognition of the 'bang per buck'

engagement return on investment of working in the public space;

- the growth in 'off-season' outdoor arts activity, often associated with light or fire in autumn and winter months;
- a slight growth in circus artists venturing into outdoor arts;
- Gorilla Circus becoming a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO);
- our NPO uplift!
- the £3m we have raised to develop the Ice House into a vocational development centre for outdoor arts and circus.

## What are the most important challenges here at the moment?

General economics, meaning less gigs and funding for artists overall. Including major local authority cuts still to come. The artistic quality of UK work, which can be quite poor compared to the international offer.

## FESTIVAL OF FOOLS

Belfast, Northern Ireland  
Outdoor Arts and Circus

→ Festival of Fools is a jam-packed May weekend of circus performances, featuring breathtaking acrobatics, gut-busting comedy and jaw-dropping juggling. The festival is the largest comedy, circus and outdoor arts festival in Northern Ireland, with over 70 performances taking place on the streets of Belfast city centre and Cathedral Quarter. All daytime shows are free to attend. The festival is the brainchild of the late Belfast Community Circus School director Will Chamberlain, who believed

passionately in the power of street theatre and laughter to bring people together regardless of background, religion or language. He established Festival of Fools in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter at a time when the area was a far cry from the bustling cultural centre it is today. Nowadays, the Festival is a firm fixture on Northern Ireland's cultural calendar, bringing thousands of visitors to Cathedral Quarter and the city centre. Festival of Fools is funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. [www.foolsfestival.com](http://www.foolsfestival.com)

## SURGE FESTIVAL

Glasgow, Scotland  
Outdoor Arts

→ SURGE runs projects to develop street arts, physical theatre and circus in Scotland. The company works with artists, performance companies and educators at all levels of experience. They also run SURGE Festival as an annual event that takes place each August. The festival brings new Scottish work and cutting-edge international performances to the streets, theatres and unusual spaces of Glasgow. SURGE Festival invites audiences to cast aside all fear and embrace the celebration of their own existence.

The streets of Glasgow become a playground for the extraordinary, where the ordinary is left behind, and the realm of imagination reigns supreme. The festival draws talent from all corners of the UK and beyond. With wild performances by giant slinkies, partying bees, cowboy chickens and giant seagulls. As if that were not enough, even the legendary Four Horsemen gallop through the city streets, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. SURGE is funded by Creative Scotland. [www.surge.scot/surge-festival](http://www.surge.scot/surge-festival)

## BIG SPLASH FESTIVAL

Newport, Wales  
Outdoor Arts

→ The Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre is at the heart of the arts and entertainment scene in Newport. The Riverfront hosts Big Splash Festival, the largest free outdoor arts festival in Wales, which takes place in July. This is an annual event that energises the streets of Newport with festival-goers who come in their thousands to be immersed in the fun and excitement of theatre and arts. The festival attracts over 20,000 visitors and brings the city to life with its extraordinarily talented artists and captivating programme of events.

The city centre is brimming with entertainment in every corner, with a programme packed full of street theatre, live music, workshops, arts and craft activities and so much more for visitors to enjoy – all free of charge. The two-day event is the perfect family experience, recommended for all ages. It's the ultimate kick-start to the summer holidays. Sing, dance, laugh, create and be enthralled. Big Splash Festival is funded by the Arts Council of Wales. [www.newportlive.co.uk/en/theatre-arts/festivals-events/big-splash/](http://www.newportlive.co.uk/en/theatre-arts/festivals-events/big-splash/)



# MERCHANT CITY FESTIVAL

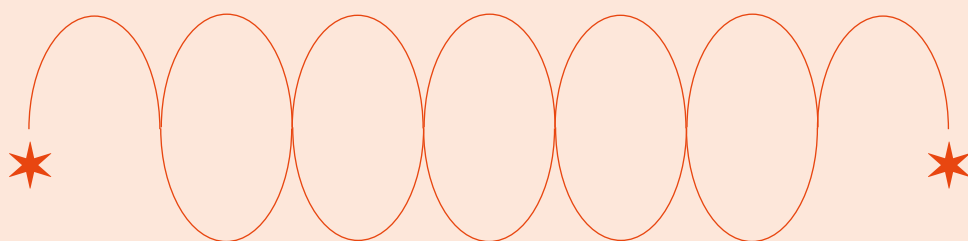
Glasgow, Scotland

Outdoor Arts

→ The Merchant City Festival is an extravaganza of street theatre, music, dance, circus, visual arts, comedy and literature in Glasgow's city centre. The festival is a fun-filled annual programme event held within the Merchant area of Glasgow. The festival is a lively celebration of outdoor arts that brings carnival to the streets. The festival works with many outdoor performance partners each year as well as highlighting work that is shown at different

outdoor festivals throughout the UK and internationally. To celebrate the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships, the biggest cycling event in the world, elements of the Merchant City Festival (MCF) formed part of the exciting Go Live! Glasgow programme. The Merchant City Festival is due to return in 2024 with a refreshed format following consultation with the businesses and people of Merchant City.

[www.merchantcityfestival.com](http://www.merchantcityfestival.com)



## ALAN RICHARDSON

Director at Surge (Scotland)

**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

I think there is a growing use of technology and the internet being integrated into work rather than just as a means of promotion.



**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

Surge is leading a four-nations bursary project that assists emerging outdoor artists to be presented at four major festivals in each of the four nations. Also, Surge has a large-scale, open-access project: Beautiful Bones, a comedy with 75 people in it about accepting your own death. This and other open-access projects I am finding interesting across the UK ... I think there are some very exciting projects embracing public engagement.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

In Scotland, the investment from Creative Scotland in outdoor arts is reducing, unlike the other home nations. Currently Surge is the only organisation working in outdoor arts that has multi-year funding (down from three the last time multi-year funding was assessed). The underinvestment makes it very difficult to develop the sector as there are very few platforms for people to perform or exhibit at.

# VENUES

Several theatres and arts centres exist in the UK that programme circus-based work on occasion. However, Jacksons Lane in London is the only venue dedicated primarily to circus. Ockham's Razor (England) recently managed to book one of the most extensive tours of middle-scale venues. It is more usual for a smaller company to have around three dates in their tour. There is not a national databank of circus audiences, so each venue has to seek out audiences for the work that they programme. A relatively small number of UK circus companies tour indoor work consistently, as they are constricted by funding. This means that, due to issues of financial risk, venues may programme more mainstream work that they know audiences will buy tickets for. Few UK venues programme international work, however the Lowry and Circomedia in England do so. The exception to this would be during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, but this is due to international companies paying for established and makeshift venues to host their shows, which is the usual Edinburgh Fringe Festival model. Venues include:



## CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

Cambridge, England

Standing capacity: 850

Seats: 220

→ A large, versatile performance and social space, Cambridge Junction is the welcoming home of original arts, entertainment and creativity. The venue presents and hosts a diverse and engaging programme of arts and culture for audiences across the city and beyond. Cambridge Junction is a centre of excellence known for their progressive and inclusive work with children and young people. The venue supports the development of artists and producers

by commissioning new work, hosting residencies, workshops and rehearsals throughout the year. Their core purpose is to share the power of live performance and creativity and invite our communities to experience, engage, explore and to be part of something at Cambridge Junction. Cambridge Junction are an Arts Council England National Portfolio organisation.

[www.junction.co.uk/events/a-spectacle-of-herself](http://www.junction.co.uk/events/a-spectacle-of-herself)

## CIRCOMEDIA ST PAUL'S CHURCH

Bristol, England

Standing capacity: 350

Seats: 150

→ A Grade-1 listed building in a conservation area and originally built in the 1790s, St Paul's Church is home to Circomedia's BTEC students, the youth circus and evening classes plus a performance programme of international circus, dance and theatre. Featuring a beautifully ornate Georgian plaster ceiling, stone columns and a wealth of decorative stained glass, the historic interior is complemented by state-of-the-art aerial and trapeze equipment and a pale maplewood semi-sprung dance

floor. In this space, Circomedia curate a fascinating and innovative performance in the heart of Bristol. In the grand Georgian surroundings of St Paul's Church, you can discover some of the most exciting circus, physical theatre and dance companies from the UK and beyond. The venue has a 30-year history as an academy for performing arts with a strong lean towards circus and physical theatre. Circomedia are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.circomedia.com/whats-on](http://www.circomedia.com/whats-on)

## DÉDA

Derby, England

Seats: 124

(main theatre)

→ Déda Centre for Dance, Movement and Creativity is based in the heart of the cathedral quarter in Derby, connecting people locally, nationally and internationally. Déda has three studios and a theatre and produces Derby Festé, an annual international outdoor street arts festival. Déda attracts 54,000 visitors to their building each year. Their mission is to deliver an exceptional programme of dance, contemporary circus and outdoor performance to as wide an audience as possible and to be recognised for their outstanding contribution in the field of dance development and learning. The organisation has grown from being a small, regional dance house to now being a nationally recognised Creative Centre with

a BA (Hons) Dance Degree and an MA in Dance and Choreography based in our building, making them a true reflection of where 'education meets the profession'. Déda is working on projects across the city and the county aimed at improving peoples' quality of life through dance and the arts. The outreach work takes them to schools, healthcare settings and community groups in Derby and around Derbyshire. Déda are fast becoming a leader in their field, bringing a high-quality arts experience to more people and putting Derby on the map as the go-to place for dance, movement and creativity. Déda are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.deda.uk.com](http://www.deda.uk.com)

## NEW VIC THEATRE

Newcastle-under-Lyme  
England

→ The New Vic is one of the country's most successful producing theatres and a key part of the region's cultural life, engaging 150,000 people each year. The venue delivers a programme of international-class work made with local audiences in mind, complemented by an award-winning community programme and education work that alone reach around 25,000 people of all ages per year. Opening in 1986 as Europe's first purpose-built theatre-in-the-round, the New Vic has a special role to play in the architectural heritage of theatre development. The busy programme includes both award-winning, in-house work and touring productions. Theatre-in-the-round is a democratic ideology, it radiates through all our work, ensuring that the local communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

have a sense of ownership and engage with the theatre at every level. As one of only a few local arts organisations, our award-winning New Vic Borderlines and New Vic Education ensure we are key to the cultural life of the region. Alongside this, the theatre leads Appetite, an Arts Council England Creative People & Places programme, to engage more people in Stoke-on-Trent in the arts. The organisation is committed to increasing aspiration, empowering communities to tackle complex social issues and making a real difference in an area that experiences serious deprivation. The New Vic operates thanks to a unique partnership between Arts Council England, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

[www.newvictheatre.org.uk](http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk)



## JACKSONS LANE

London, England

Seats: 168 (main theatre)

→ For over 45 years, Jacksons Lane has been at the heart of North London's artistic community. Jacksons Lane is a multi-arts venue. The building is home to a theatre, a large-scale dance and rehearsal studio, a cafe and bar and four other multi-purpose spaces. Jacksons Lane's artistic vision, led by Ade Berry, is in the support of emerging and established artists working within the fields of contemporary circus and performance, and the production and presentation of exciting and innovative work. It is one of the UK's leading producers of new, small to mid-scale circus, working with and supporting almost 50 companies a year. As the flagship arts and cultural venue in Haringey, Jacksons Lane's year-round programme of contemporary performance, arts participation

and cultural education exists to empower, and ignite creativity within, diverse communities. In this way, Jacksons Lane work tirelessly to overcome traditional barriers through art. Jackson's Lane are committed to leading the way in the creation, production, presentation and artist/audience development of contemporary circus theatre. In November 2020 work started on a major redevelopment project for the building to address some of the challenges of operating for more than a century. This included accessibility into and throughout the building, in addition to the layout of their studio spaces and facilities across the venue. Jacksons Lane are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.jacksonslane.org.uk](http://www.jacksonslane.org.uk)

## THE LOWRY

Salford, England

Seats:

1,730 (Lyric Theatre)

440 (Quays Theatre)

120 (The Studio)

→ The Lowry is committed to using visual and performing arts to enrich people's lives. The Lowry presents audiences with a diverse programme of theatre, opera, musicals, dance, music, comedy and visual art, as well as events and activities, to expand the horizons of audiences and artists alike. At the heart of their work is a commitment to our local communities and young people. Tapping into the work on their stages and in their galleries, the Lowry offers thousands of free creative participation

opportunities each year. It is passionate about nurturing talent, developing creative professionals of the future and raising aspirations. The Lowry brings the highest-quality visual and performing art to Salford, breaking down barriers for new audiences to be inspired by great art and offering an extensive curriculum-based schools and teachers programme. The Lowry is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. [www.helowry.com/whats-on/genres/circus](http://www.helowry.com/whats-on/genres/circus)



## ADE BERRY

Artistic Director at Jacksons Lane

**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

Neurodivergence, the environment, mental health are core themes that arise out of new work.

**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

The cross-fertilisation of circus with many art forms, exciting new emerging artists and audiences returning after a challenging two years.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

A lack of new companies being formed, too much solo work (albeit strong work), insufficient money (obviously) and still a lack of venues willing to programme circus.



## PONTIO ARTS AND INNOVATION CENTRE (BANGOR UNIVERSITY)

Bangor, Wales

Seats: 450 (Bryn Terfel Theatre)  
120 (Studio) Standing capacity:  
500 (Bryn Terfel Theatre)

→ Split over six levels, Pontio is Bangor University's new arts and innovation centre. The Grimshaw-designed building in the centre of Bangor is home to a flexible, mid-scale theatre named after the world-famous bass-baritone Bryn Terfel. The building also contains a studio theatre, a digital cinema, a cutting-edge innovation centre and a wide range of facilities for students, including a new home for the Students' Union and numerous learning and teaching spaces. Pontio offers an eclectic mix of entertainment seven days a week, from the latest film releases and independent films to

music and drama, gigs, comedy, family shows, cabaret shows and more. Theatr Bryn Terfel's flexible auditorium means that it can transform from a 450-seat traditional proscenium-arch theatre experience, to theatre-in-the-round, to standing-only gigs. This is the first space of its kind in North West Wales. The venue also includes a white box, two lecture rooms, the Pontio Innovation Area with a focus on transdisciplinary working and rapid prototyping, the Co-Lab, Media Lab, Hackspace and Fablab areas, plus an external performance area. Funded by the Arts Council Wales.

[www.pontio.co.uk/Online/default.asp](http://www.pontio.co.uk/Online/default.asp)

## THEATR BRYCHEINIOG

Brecon, Wales

Seats: 477 (theatre),  
120 (studio/rehearsal space)

→ Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon's Centre for the Arts, opened in April 1997 as the first wholly Lottery-funded, new-build arts organisation in the UK. The Arts Centre is situated in probably one of the most picturesque locations of any venue in the UK. Built alongside the canal basin in the heart of Brecon, serving the town and surrounding areas of Powys, Monmouthshire and beyond, it is rooted firmly in the community it serves. The venue currently provides a varied programme of theatre, dance, music and entertainment in its purpose-built auditorium and a studio/rehearsal space. It also has a meeting room, dressing

rooms and a gallery space, all of which are versatile spaces that host a variety of events. Theatr Brycheiniog serves not only its community through an outstanding programme of quality, professional, English- and Welsh-language productions, but it is also home to the Brecon Baroque Festival, which attracts audiences and visitors nationally and internationally. The theatre is open year around and prides itself on attracting visitors from across the country and also internationally. Theatr Brycheiniog is funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

[www.brycheiniog.co.uk/en](http://www.brycheiniog.co.uk/en)

## THEATR MWLDAN

Cardigan, Wales

→ Mwldan is a vibrant arts and cinema complex situated in the centre of Cardigan, an old market town on the beautiful coast of West Wales. With three fully digital screens, Mwldan is Wales' only truly independent multiplex, welcoming over 300,000 people a year. Mwldan presents a year-round, diverse and eclectic professional programme of national and international artistic activity across a wide range of art forms. Mwldan is also a major producing venue, primarily focused on live music productions, which tour venues and festivals the world over. With a dedication to innovation, vision and excellence, Mwldan has been described by the Arts Council of Wales as 'exemplary' and a 'model of best practice and excellence' for

its touring and production work. Specialising in touring production and logistics, marketing, financial and administrative tour management, Mwldan has also provided many artists with the opportunity to extensively tour the fantastic network of venues, theatres and arts centres available within Wales. Since 2006 Mwldan has co-produced more than 70 touring projects, making us one of Wales' most prolific producing venues. At Mwldan's heart is the belief that the arts can deliver life-changing and life-enhancing experiences that have the power to change perceptions and increase tolerance, breaking down cultural divides and allowing greater understanding. Funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

[www.mwldan.co.uk](http://www.mwldan.co.uk)

## BEACON ARTS CENTRE

Greenock, Scotland

Seats:

500 (theatre)

120 (black-box studio with theatre seating)

Standing room:

200 (black-box studio)

→ Beacon Arts Centre is an all-day, all-week arts centre at the heart of Greenock's Waterfront regeneration. All year round, the venue presents an array of performances in both the main auditorium and studio spaces, from national arts companies such as the National Theatre of Scotland and Scottish Opera, to large-scale community musicals and amateur theatre, captivating dance, uplifting music and circus. The outreach and creative learning programme invites local people to get involved, no matter their age, ability or background, in exciting, fun-filled theatre and dance projects, as well as

boundary-pushing masterclasses and workshops; local, national and international artists are showcased in constantly changing exhibitions in the upstairs gallery. And all this comes with unrivalled, ever-changing panoramic views across the Firth of Clyde to the Highlands beyond. At Beacon Arts Centre, the venue want to make the world a better place through our wide range of activities for the local people of Inverclyde and our visitors from far beyond.

[www.beaconartscentre.co.uk](http://www.beaconartscentre.co.uk)

## DUNOON BURGH HALL

Dunoon, Scotland

Seats:

250 (theatre, incl. balcony)

→ Built in 1874 and refurbished as theatre space in 2017, Dunoon Burgh Hall is a cultural and creative hub for the Cowal Peninsula and the west of Scotland. Alongside a theatre and art gallery, the venue offers creative workshop spaces, a garden and an inviting cafe. The recently refurbished Victorian building was rescued from demolition by the local community, who came together to fight for their cultural heritage. The building was purchased for a token £1 in 2008 and it is now a fully accessible and inclusive arts venue. The Hall offers a diverse programme of performances and exhibitions alongside a successful film

festival and a lively jazz festival. As a venue, the organisation strives to be inclusive, flexible and creative in their approach to audience development and community engagement. They are keen to explore opportunities to collaborate with performers who are interested in creating work in a visually stunning rural or semi-rural setting. Dunoon Hall has coasts, rivers, waterfalls, forests and a botanic garden on its doorstep. The venue is well connected within the local community, and the organisation are passionate about giving local people access to the arts.

[www.dunoonburghhall.org.uk/](http://www.dunoonburghhall.org.uk/)

## TRAVERSE THEATRE

Edinburgh, Scotland

→ As Scotland's new-writing theatre, the Traverse Theatre is a dynamic centre for performance, experience and discovery. Enabling people across society to access and engage with theatre is our fundamental mission. The year-round programme bursts with new stories and live performances that challenge, inform and entertain. The Traverse Theatre empowers artists and audiences to make sense of the world today, providing a safe space to question, learn, empathise and – crucially – encounter different people and experiences. Conversation and the coming together of groups are central to a democratic society, and the organisation champions equal expression and understanding. The Traverse Theatre commissions, produces and

programmes for existing and future audiences to offer new and exciting experiences for everyone, and our partnerships with other theatre companies and festivals enable us to present a wide range of innovative performances. The Traverse Theatre would not exist without our over-arching passion for talent development and embracing the unexplored. The venue works with the newest and rawest talent – with an emphasis on the Scottish-based – nurturing it to become the art, artists and performances that can be seen on stage through a variety of creative learning and literary programmes. The Traverse Theatre is funded by Creative Scotland.

[www.traverse.co.uk](http://www.traverse.co.uk)

## CIRCUSFUL

Belfast, Northern  
Ireland

Seats: 60 to 100  
(theatre)

→ Circusful is Ireland's premier circus arts organisation. Its headquarters in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter is the first and only fully equipped, purpose-built circus arts centre on the island. Founded in 1985 under the name Belfast Community Circus School (BCCS), Circusful's vision is for a 21st century where the streets, hearts and minds are filled with the wonder and colour of circus. Circusful's mission is to support people to surprise themselves through circus, meeting them

where they are, having fun and building a community together. Circusful offer residencies to artists (mostly NI or Irish based) in their space at specific times of the year and have introduced an indoor programming strand to Festival of Fools. Circusful's space can transform into a black-box theatre, raked or cabaret style, and the venue has rigging, lights and a sound system. Circusful is funded by The Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

[www.circusful.org](http://www.circusful.org)

## FLORA HERBERICH

Head of Programmes at  
Pathways & Participation, Circusful

**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

In terms of circus creation, we are definitely seeing increasing ambition from Irish artists to make work that deals with issues, talks about important personal/political topics and comes from an increasingly diverse pool of voices, which is great. Artists are seeking to tell a compelling story and weaving a narrative through their work and practice – often working to ensure audiences are emotionally engaged and challenged and posing questions through their work.

**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

What excites us about the sector at the moment is how, by being in Northern Ireland, we have the opportunity create connections and build strong partnerships with both local partners and those in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. We see the development and investment in circus and outdoor arts that both Arts Council England and Arts Council Ireland are making and we are keen to make the most of our unique position in NI and connect more intelligently across those borders and others. We strongly believe that national and international partnerships will help us drive the development of the industry forward.



**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

For us in Northern Ireland specifically, we are still challenged by a lack of understanding of the true depth and breadth of circus and outdoor work and an outdated view of the art form. Believe it or not, most weeks we still get questions about whether we work with animals, only do juggling and how scary the clowns are ... At times it can feel as though the art form is not taken seriously and the impact and importance of circus is not understood. This, of course, then has implications for funding, engaging audiences and selling larger-scale pieces of work. It can also feel like we are not given the same recognition as other art forms. However, we hope to change this!



## THE MAC BELFAST

Northern Ireland

Seats: 250 (downstairs theatre)  
120 (upstairs theatre)  
100 (The Factory)

→ The MAC Belfast is an award-winning venue in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter. It is home to all kinds of exhibitions, theatre performances, experimental works and endless goings-on. The MAC is a cultural hub and since opening in 2012 has quickly become a beacon for the ongoing regeneration of Belfast, offering an eclectic programme of visual art, theatre, dance, family workshops and lots more. Since opening, almost 2.5 million visitors have come through the doors of the MAC. These

visitors have attended more than 3,000 live performances, 45 visual art exhibitions, 100s of workshops, and collectively drunk over 400,000 cups of coffee. The Artist in Residence programme brings international, national and local artists across a range of art forms and experiences to the MAC. This supported programme allows for non-outcome-based practice development. The MAC Belfast is supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

[www.themaclive.com](http://www.themaclive.com)

## THE TOURING NETWORK

Scotland

→ Remarkable live performances in rural Scotland. Each year, members stage over 900 events in the highlands and islands in over 90 small-scale venues, from community centres to pubs, village halls to historic castles. Set amidst some of the most breathtaking scenery in the world, these small-scale events bring you up close and personal with the very best performers from across Scotland and beyond. Whether you're looking for advice, pockets of funding, resources, or to make connections in the region, the Touring Network invites you to join the Network. Extend your tour route and discover hidden corners of the country, meet

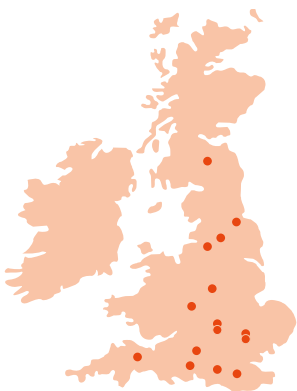
new people and perform in up-close and personal spaces for a tour like no other. The Network is made up of touring performers at all stages of their career and across all art forms, as well as small-scale venues and community spaces run by volunteer promoters and professional programmers. The Touring Network supports, represents and connects a vibrant community of independent promoters and performers who present high-quality live performance across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, transforming remote community spaces into cultural centres and performances venues.

[www.thetouringnetwork.com](http://www.thetouringnetwork.com)

## SAMPLE OF A MID-SCALE TOUR

Ockham's Razor touring  
Tess in 2023/2024.

Commissioned by The Lowry, Salford and London International Mime Festival. Funded by Arts Council England, The Foyle Foundation, PRS Foundation's The Open Fund for Organisations, Garrick Charitable Trust and Royal Victoria Hall Foundation. Supported by artsdepot, Shoreditch Town Hall, National Centre for Circus Arts, Bristol Circus City and MimeLondon.



### Venues

- Unit 15, Circus City, Bristol
- Lawrence Batley, Huddersfield
- Malvern Theatre, Malvern
- Cornerstone, Didcot
- Peacock Theatre, Sadler's Wells, London
- The Traverse, Edinburgh
- The Lowry, Salford Quays
- Lighthouse, Poole
- Northcott, Exeter
- artsdepot, North Finchley
- Oxford Playhouse, Oxford
- The Belgrade, Coventry
- New Theatre Royal, Portsmouth
- York Theatre Royal, York
- Worthing Theatres, Worthing
- Salisbury Playhouse, Salisbury

# TRAINING CENTRES AND RESIDENCY SPACES

In 1986, the now-late Richard Ward was the founder of Fool Time in Bristol, Britain's first professional circus school in the UK and the first English-language circus school in the world. Fool Time secured premises in a Victorian school in Kingswood, on the edge of Bristol. After Fool Time closed in 1993, Circomedia was formed, taking over use of this building. Later, spearheaded by Helen Crocker, Circomedia was able to open a second site in St Paul's Church. Built in the 1790s, the church was restored through an award-winning collaboration between The Churches Conservation Trust and Circomedia.

The National Centre for Circus Arts (NCCA) in London, previously called Circus Space, was established in 1989 in a former timber yard on North Road, London. The organisation provided support for professional performers plus an adult evening programme and a youth programme. In 1994, the operation moved to the former Shoreditch Electricity Generating Station in Hoxton, starting initially with a BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Circus) in 1995. A BA (Hons) degree course in Circus, in association with the Central School of Speech and Drama, was developed in 1999.

These two training centres are members of FEDEC, the international network for professional circus education, as is the Association of Higher Education Circus Arts Providers (AHECAP, UK). AHECAP was created in 2010 to promote and support the development of circus arts training at higher education level in order to ensure the recognition of circus arts across the country. It is comprised of all the higher education

institutions that offer a circus arts curriculum in the UK.

Some universities in the UK include circus and outdoor arts modules in their performing arts courses. For example, the drama department of the University of Exeter offers 'Al Fresco: Illegitimate, Itinerant, Outdoor Arts'. Several UK universities support PhD students undertaking research into circus and outdoor arts.

There are several building-based organisations that offer training or support to professionals working in circus, including Circusful (Northern Ireland). The latter organisation, previously called Belfast Community Circus School, is the longest running circus school on the island of Ireland and was set up in 1985. In London, Aircraft Circus Academy offers a four-month intensive training course for people over 16 years old who have a background in gymnastics, dance, physical theatre or similar. In 2023, Derry-based arts charity In Your Space Circus (IYSC, Northern Ireland) announced plans to develop the Cathedral School, located at St Columb's Cathedral in Derry's Cathedral Quarter. In a unique partnership with St Columb's Cathedral, IYSC has taken a lease on the stunning Cathedral School building, with plans to refurbish the building into a circus school and circus arts venue.

Companies, including Mimbire (England), Ockham's Razor (England) and NoFit State (Wales), at times, provide apprenticeship schemes. Organisations including Greentop Circus in Sheffield (England) and Aerial Edge in Glasgow (Scotland) offer professional development support for artists.

# CIRCOMEDIA ACADEMY FOR CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

Bristol (England)

Circus and Physical Theatre

→ Circomedia is a world-renowned centre for contemporary circus and physical theatre training in the UK. Circomedia's Circus Academy offers a range of full-time courses delivered in partnership with City of Bristol College and Bath Spa University. Circomedia has been at the forefront of contemporary circus education for over thirty years. Above all, it is one of their core educational beliefs that minds and personalities need developing just as much as physical skill. Circomedia nurtures students to take an imaginative and innovative approach to training. In addition, they aim to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need for the existing artistic landscape, so that students can create their own blend of circus and theatre for the future.

Circomedia encourages all students to devise work that challenges and inspires, in the hope that they will discover the fullness of their physical, emotional and creative potential. The school offers BTEC,

Degree, and MA courses combining high-calibre skills tuition and body training with the development of creative thinking, presentational flair and business know-how. As a result, their graduates develop into accomplished creative artists that challenge the perceptions of circus and physical performance.

Circomedia also offers a privately-funded, unaccredited version of the degree called the Vocational Course. This course is ideal for people who want to develop their skills in contemporary circus and physical theatre, but who do not require a formal qualification. In September 2017, Circomedia launched the world's first master's degree in directing circus, in partnership with Bath Spa University. The organisation is home to one of the largest youth circuses in the UK with over 300 students and runs short courses for adults of all abilities. Circomedia are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.circomedia.com](http://www.circomedia.com)

# THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CIRCUS ARTS

London (England)

Circus

→ The National Centre for Circus Arts (NCCA) is located in the heart of East London, one of the world's leading performing arts capitals. The National Centre is proud to call Hoxton their home – a bustling hub for creatives, birthplace of the 90s Brit Art scene and minutes away from Brick Lane, Columbia Road and Shoreditch High Street. Based in a magnificent Victorian power station adjacent to Hoxton Square, the NCCA involves thousands of people in the creation and performance of circus arts every year and is one of Europe's leading providers of circus education. Its diverse range of work includes a BA (Hons) degree in circus arts, a structured progressive training programme for under-18s and professional development opportunities for aspiring and established performers. The higher education programme comprises a foundation degree and BA (Hons) degree in circus arts. The NCCA

enrols around 30 new students each year and graduates have gone on to join companies such as Giffords, Cirque du Soleil, Ockham's Razor, Cirque Eloize, Seven Fingers, Circa and GOM, or set up their own circus production companies such as Barely Methodical Troupe, Brainfools and The Revel Puck Circus. When students graduate, the NCCA actively continues to engage with them as artists and support their work. The NCCA's Open Training for professional circus artists, allows students, graduates and circus artists to access independent training in the building. Through access to spaces, graduates are able to continue to train and grow, seeking inspiration and collaborating with other circus professionals. The NCCA also offers recreational classes for adults and young people. The NCCA was until recently an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.nationalcircus.org.uk](http://www.nationalcircus.org.uk)

# AIRCRAFT CIRCUS ACADEMY

London (England)  
Circus

→ AirCircuit Circus' founders are Alex Frith, Nik Litton, Moira Campbell, Lucy Francis. In April 2002, Alex and Nik set up a living and working space called The Hangar, which quickly developed, very organically, into a vibrant circus hub, a place where shows could be rehearsed and like-minded circus practitioners could meet and live. The Hangar was used regularly by many luminary circus and production companies of the noughties, both big and small: ENO, Royal Opera, BBC, SKY, Lord of the Rings, Heir of Insanity, Cardboard Citizens, Physicality, Blue Eyed Soul, etc.

In June 2018, the new school was created and AirCircuit Circus Academy was launched with a belief that anybody can learn circus skills no matter what age or fitness level. The Four Month Fulltime Course in Circus Arts caters to improvers through to intermediate and advanced levels. AirCircuit Circus Academy has been running this

course for over 12 years and have trained over 350 students, many of whom are now working in the circus industry, including the London cabaret scene, big top circus shows, festivals and large-scale shows such as Cirque Du Soleil and Dragone. The course aims to fast-track people into the circus world and help build a solid foundation in a wide variety of circus disciplines. Also at a professional level, the one-week, one-month, and two-month intensives offer training for 5 days a week, with 25 hours of tuition each week. Classes include aerial hoop, silks, static trapeze, flying trapeze, straps, rope, stretch, dance, acrobalance, handstands, trampet, acrobatics, and performance. In addition, AirCircuit Circus Academy offers a wide range of adult and young people's classes and runs the annual Greenwich Circus Festival. AirCircuit Circus Academy is a member of FEDEC.

[www.aircraftcircus.com](http://www.aircraftcircus.com)

## READ ABOUT SOME OF THE UK'S RESIDENCY SPACES BELOW:

### COVE PARK

Cove (Scotland)  
Multidisciplinary

→ Cove Park is an international artists' residency centre located on an outstanding rural site on Scotland's west coast. Its residencies support the development of new work by national and international artists, groups and organisations working in all art forms. Cove Park works with individuals or groups. The organisation offers funded residencies throughout the year. These opportunities are awarded following an open call and application process, or via nomination and direct invitation. Residents are given the time, space, freedom and financial support to concentrate on the development of their own work. This programme

supports those wishing to focus on specific projects and those aiming to develop new ideas without the demands of deadlines or public presentation. This is enhanced through a series of events designed to promote discussion between all the artists on residency. Residents receive a fee, private and self-catering accommodation, workspace and, if required, a studio. All artists have 24-hour access to Cove Park's Jacobs Building and its communal spaces, kitchen and library. Cove Park is supported by Creative Scotland.

[www.covepark.org](http://www.covepark.org)

# THE DRILL HOUSE

Great Yarmouth (England)  
Circus and Outdoor Arts

→ The Drill House, based in Great Yarmouth, UK, is a national centre dedicated to the development of circus and outdoor arts. As a sector-leading organisation, Out There Arts delivers outstanding opportunities for artists through supporting, hosting and delivering a variety of circus and outdoor arts projects, events, small commissions and residencies. The Drill House has been home to Out There Arts since February 2012 and is located in the heart of Great Yarmouth's Heritage Quarter. The Grade II-listed building was built in 1867 and is the former home of the 2nd Volunteer Battalion Norfolk Regiment. In 2016 the first phase of the redevelopment of the building was completed with £1m invested into the main hall, supported through public funding from Arts Council England. The Drill House hosts

national and international residencies to artists and companies working in circus and outdoor arts. With the help of almost £2m from the Heritage Fund in 2023, a second building, The Ice House, is set to be transformed into the UK's Centre of Excellence in Outdoor Circus and Arts. The completion of the project, which is being led by Out There Arts, would be a significant step towards the realisation of a vision for Great Yarmouth being recognised as the UK Capital for Circus and Outdoor Arts. Out There Arts is a Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.outtherearts.org.uk/residencies](http://www.outtherearts.org.uk/residencies)

# PROTEUS

Basingstoke (England)  
Multidisciplinary

→ Proteus supports a wide range of artists, both in terms of art form and where they are in their individual careers. From early-career circus performers to established visual artists, Proteus plays a vital role in the development of the artistic community in both Basingstoke and beyond. The support that Proteus can offer takes on many forms. Some examples: supporting the development of new work through its innovative Performance Lab bursary opportunities; year-long support through its Associate Artist programme; and providing affordable studio and event space through Creation Space and other locations within the borough, such as Spring Park House.

Proteus also offers numerous paid opportunities and collaborations through their in-house and touring programme. Performance

Lab is their open-access, performing arts development programme. Each year, Proteus supports eight artists to try out new ideas or explore new directions in their practice. Whether you are just starting out or pretty well established, Proteus is here to support you to take risks and grow as an artist. They work with a wide range of artists – from playwrights to performance poets, circus artists to choreographers, live artists to puppeteers. This programme offers up to one week of free rehearsal space in our studio or other parts of Creation Space, a bursary, artistic and professional development support from members of the Proteus team, the opportunity to share your ideas in front of a live audience of local residents and artists and get their feedback.

[www.proteustheatre.com/artist-support](http://www.proteustheatre.com/artist-support)

## COIGACH & ASSYNT LIVING LANDSCAPE

North West Highlands (Scotland)

Outdoor Arts

→ A partnership of 14 community landowners, community interest groups, charitable landowners, private landowners and charitable membership organisations. Together they have 28 (and counting) projects in the Coigach and Assynt areas of the North West Highlands as part of their National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported partnership scheme. The aims of the scheme include encouraging people to engage with the natural, cultural and built heritage of the area, and art presents a unique

opportunity to achieve this. Past activities include artist residencies and hosting a performance of Oceanallover's Orographic. Following the success of that performance, the partnership would welcome the opportunity to host a further outdoor performance and have a range of locations that could be suitable for a variety of pieces. Although the original funded Scheme has technically come to an end, there are a number of ongoing projects.

[www.coigach-assynt.org](http://www.coigach-assynt.org)



## 101 OUTDOOR ARTS

Newbury (England)

Circus and Outdoor Arts

→ 101 Outdoor Arts is the National Centre for Arts in Public Spaces. Over the last six years, 101 has become a principal UK residential centre for outdoor arts creation and production. 101 is a national hub for innovation and talent development in the outdoor arts and a space for dialogue, collaboration and learning. 101 Outdoor Arts supports artists from all over the world who make work for the outdoors and public space, through a year round programme of artistic residencies, professional development events and a dedicated design and fabrication workshop. Artists from a wide range of disciplines can make use of the large and intimate rehearsal spaces, staying on-site in our artists' village.

As part of Corn Exchange Newbury, 101 Outdoor Arts present vibrant and wide-reaching outdoor events in partnership with our local communities, bringing thousands of people together each year to experience a free international programme of events in public space.

Based in a 20,000 square foot warehouse on the former Greenham Common US Airbase, 101 Outdoor

Arts houses both giant and intimate rehearsal spaces, ensuite accommodation facilities and a fabrication workshop. The organisation, under the guidance of 101's Strategic Lead Simon Chatterton, hosts around 50 residencies a year for the creation and production of new work for the outdoors and public spaces. It also curates a programme of R&D residencies fostering innovation and experimentation and run 101Labs. 101Labs is a professional development programme for artists who create work for the outdoors and public spaces, and for those who would like to consider making outdoor work. With the future of outdoor arts as its focus, the 101Labs programme brings practitioners together for inspiration, discussion, debate and training. 101 Outdoor Arts is part of the larger Corn Exchange Newbury family of organisations. It is supported by the Corn Exchange Newbury across different projects at varying levels and funded by Greenham Trust and Arts Council England.

[www.101outdoorarts.com/artist-development](http://www.101outdoorarts.com/artist-development)

## NOFIT STATE

Cardiff (Wales)

Circus

→ As the UK's leading contemporary circus company, NoFit State is responsible for some of the most exciting and innovative work around today. In addition to daytime sessions for professional company members, visiting artists, teachers and professionals from circus, dance, gymnastic and similar skilled backgrounds, the organisation offers some of the best creative rehearsal space in Wales.

NoFit State is committed to supporting the growth, creativity and sustainability of the UK circus sector. This includes the Traditions programme, which is a circus sector development programme designed to provide circus artists and professionals with vital support as they transition between key stages in their careers. Professional skills development and access to space are

other ways that the organisation supports the sector.

The main space is situated on the ground floor and its dimensions are 10 × 20 m with 6.5 m clearance. Circus training that can take place here includes: static and swinging trapeze, rope, silks, Chinese pole and tight wire. The space contains a range of crash and tumble mats. The floor is semi-sprung wood. The studio is on the ground floor and its dimensions are 7 × 5.7 m with a 3.5 m clearance, with a dance floor with semi-sprung wood. The wonder of the audience is what makes working with NoFit State so thrilling. The organisation can offer companies using the space to create work the ability to connect with local audiences to try out their work. NoFit State Circus is funded by the Arts Council of Wales.

[www.nofitstate.org/artist-support](http://www.nofitstate.org/artist-support)

## JACKSONS LANE

London (England)

Circus & Multi-disciplinary

→ Jacksons Lane backs circus artists throughout their careers. The support for contemporary circus artists and companies has been an essential part of its work for more than a decade. Jacksons Lane offers assistance to any artist who requires it, regardless of whether they are just starting out in the industry, or have years of experience under their belt. This includes access to the theatre, audiences, partners plus residencies. Accessing space in which to create new work is the biggest challenge for most circus artists, both established and emerging. Through utilising the theatre with its 6.5-metre-high rigging facilities, Jacksons Lane is able to support most circus disciplines, particularly aerial work. Through the additional five studio spaces, the organisation can offer more support for ground-based disciplines and dance/circus

hybrid work. Jacksons Lanes work with many global countries to offer performances and residencies. In recent times this has included showcasing work from France, Norway, Mexico, Palestine and many others. The organisation regularly collaborates with Scandinavian companies and has worked in partnership with the Finnish Institute in the UK and Ireland many times. Support given to artists has included: outside eye and dramaturgy, previews and scratch performances, international exposure, graduate and early career support, technical and marketing support and advice, the presentation of work including premieres and previews, festival showcases and performances, including the London International Mime Festival, producing and co-producing and an Associate Artists programme.

[www.jacksonslane.org.uk/circus](http://www.jacksonslane.org.uk/circus)

# THE INVISIBLE CIRCUS, UNIT 15 CREATION SPACE

**Bristol (England)**

**Circus and Outdoor Arts**

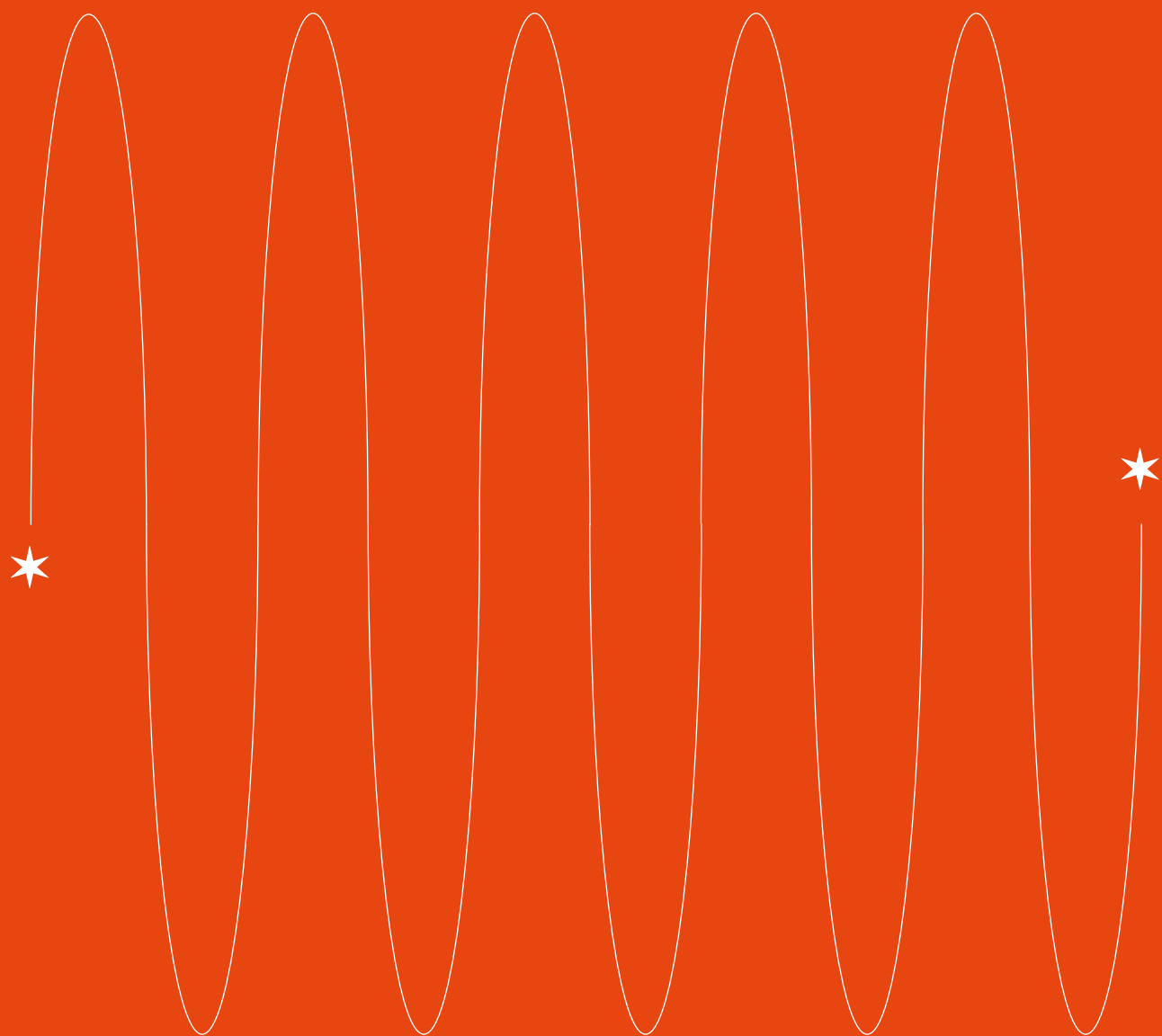
→ Formed in 1996 and based in the UK since 2002, The Invisible Circus draws much of its approach to creation and performance from its history as a troupe of travelling street performers delivering circus, art and theatre directly to communities across Europe, who may not ordinarily have the opportunity to interact with and enjoy the arts. Unit 15 Creation Space is recognised within the circus industry both locally and internationally, as a highly equipped training space for professional performance artists and companies (with over 200 registered members) and a venue for public workshops, courses and performances. Artists travel from across the country, and indeed the world, to use the comprehensive facilities available at Unit 15.

The Invisible Circus also runs Project 345 on the same site, which hosts 16 affordable creative studios. When the organisation arrived in the empty yard and warehouse, they had a vision of what it could become and have found it an exciting and

rewarding journey watching it grow to its full potential. Initiatives include Launch Pad 2023, The Invisible Circus' Residency Programme. This bi-annual opportunity provides grassroots artists and producing companies with in-kind, exclusive use of Unit 15 to develop new, innovative and inclusive work. Unit 15 itself is a multifaceted warehouse suitable for a wide array of happenings, particularly suited to projects requiring rigging infrastructure and ideal for dynamic aerial practices such as Cloud Swing and Swinging Trapeze. Unit 15 may close due to developers purchasing the building, but the work of The Invisible Circus continues. Their experience has sparked an important opportunity for new conversations about how cultural organisations, developers and decision makers can work together to keep culture thriving in city centres. Keep up to date with new opportunities and spaces by subscribing to their Newsletter. [www.unit15bristol.com/our-future](http://www.unit15bristol.com/our-future)







# ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

## WITHOUT WALLS

(England)

Outdoor Arts Festival and  
Artists Support Network

→ Without Walls is a network of over 35 organisations that brings the best in outdoor arts to people in towns and cities across England. Since its formation in 2007, Without Walls has developed and toured over 200 new shows both in the UK and internationally across 22 countries. Without Walls commissions outdoor shows of the highest quality that push the boundaries of what outdoor arts can be. Each year, the network presents a programme of new work that premieres at its Artistic Directorate festivals. These shows go on to tour across our wider network. Without

Walls supports experienced artists that have been working within the outdoor arts sector for many years, as well as artists creating outdoor work for the first time. It also provides financial support for the research and development of new work, as well as professional and creative development opportunities. The Without Walls programme tours across the network nationally and internationally, contributing to England's position as a global leader in outdoor arts. Without Walls is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.

[www.withoutwalls.uk.com](http://www.withoutwalls.uk.com)



## NASA

(UK)

Outdoor Arts

→ The National Association of Street Artists is a networking community of artists and makers who create and perform outside. NASA is a membership organisation of around 120 artists who make performance and spectacle for outdoor spaces: street corners, town squares, parks, beachfronts or remote rural landscapes. Members are performers, dancers, musicians, designers, makers, writers and directors who make performance that is intimate and monumental, strolling and static, that plays with words, images, movement, sound and light, that tells stories and offers worlds of wonder for people to play in. Members can benefit from ongoing learning about outdoor arts work, from the wisdom earned by years on the road to the fresh invention of those starting out.

NASA values, the unique artistry of its members, the power of positive provocation, sharing

know-how, skills, time and resources. It seeks to support more sustainable futures, inclusivity, driving towards a more open, accessible and richly diverse network of artists who offer mutual support. Being a professional artist is hard and a feeling of solidarity and optimism can ease the strain in creating work and experiences for audiences and communities.

NASA offers a platform for members to showcase their work; runs networking, learning and sharing events; engages in national strategy and policy discussions; advocates for the outdoor arts sector, artists and members; networks with key organisations; provides information and skill sharing, discussion forums and peer support; carries out research in collaboration with project partners; and creates artist development opportunities.

[www.nasauk.org](http://www.nasauk.org)

# ARTICULATION

(Scotland)

Circus and Outdoor Arts

→ Articulation is an advocacy and development organisation for the circus, outdoor arts and the physical performance sector in Scotland. Articulation works strategically, in partnership with artists and organisations across the sector, to champion home-grown talent on a local and international level, to give agency to under-represented artists, and to promote and develop high quality work. Articulation is committed to supporting a thriving and robust sector, and to encouraging diversity, innovation and sustainability.

Articulation is a group of individuals who actively support and participate in the development of circus, outdoor arts and physical theatre. Articulation's vision is for Scotland to have a sustainable physical performance sector producing high quality work that will engage the public across the country and

internationally. Its aims include to support a sustainable physical performance sector in Scotland; for Scotland to be a place where people can earn a living working in circus, street theatre and physical theatre; for Scotland to have the facilities to create work and to rehearse it, with places to perform and audiences to perform to, with people to inspire and be inspired by; and for more awe-inspiring, high-quality work to be available to the public in Scotland, both home grown and from abroad. Articulation wants to get Scotland on the international map as a home for diverse physical performance and for these art forms to be easily recognised, well respected and supported both within the arts world and in the public realm generally. Supported by Creative Scotland.

[www.articulationarts.or](http://www.articulationarts.or)

# ARTICULTURE

(Wales)

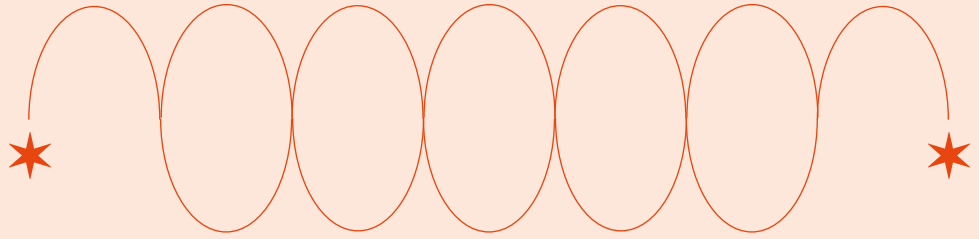
Outdoor Arts

→ Articulture supports the development of innovative, high-quality outdoor arts and diverse engaged audiences in Wales. Articulture works with a community of diverse collaborators on three main initiatives. Grow: fostering a community of collaborators from a wide range of arts and non-arts sectors makes the creation and showcasing of outdoor arts possible. This includes offering a wide range of networking and development opportunities. Create: working alongside artists at varying stages of their career to create new work for audiences in Wales and beyond. Articulture's focus here is to increase and diversify the work being created, the pool of artists making this work and the audiences experiencing it. Showcase: engaging with national and international partners to provide platforms for Welsh artists. Articulture's priority is to serve Welsh audiences; however, it also recognises the importance of raising profiles beyond Wales

in order to achieve sustainable careers for artists living and working here.

The organisation is motivated by the belief that outdoor arts has a unique and powerful ability to encourage widespread participation and mutually beneficial partnerships across all sectors of society that help develop more sustainable communities in Wales. Articulture is a team with a long-standing passion for and experience in outdoor arts. They listen, connect and facilitate to bring about long-term change. Working around the kitchen table in rural Mid Wales, Articulture understand first-hand the challenges of making work in Wales, and this informs the way they work: flexibly and collaboratively, with the whole of Wales in mind. Articulture is an active member of key international outdoor arts networks including the European circus and street arts network, Circostrada, as well as Outdoor Arts UK and the National Association of Street Artists.

[www.articulture-wales.co.uk](http://www.articulture-wales.co.uk)



# ANGELA ADAMS-GRAY

Director at Articulation Arts



**What are the current trends (in the art form or art forms that you are commenting on/in the part of the UK that you are talking about)?**

Accessibility: we are motivated by the knowledge that outdoor arts and physical performance are some of the most accessible art forms and can promote social inclusion by breaking down social and cultural barriers, creating shared experiences and celebrating diversity. It is free or low-cost, which makes it more accessible to those who may not have the means to attend ticketed events and helps develop more sustainable communities in Scotland. Another facet of outdoor arts, circus and physical performance's incredible accessibility is the fact these art forms do not depend on spoken language. People who do not speak English can engage with the physicality of the art forms and with the broader stories that are communicated.

**What excites you about the sector here at the moment?**

Through the delivery of our wide-ranging advocacy and professional development and

networking events, Articulation strives to clarify where outdoor arts, circus and physical performance sits within the broader arts ecology. Part of our role as an organisation is to address the notion that outdoor arts and physical performance is in any way a lesser relative within the performing arts. We want to address gaps our sector is not engaging with – including sustainability and inclusion – and robust evaluation and monitoring will help us do this. This will also help us embrace and celebrate areas where our sectors are leading the way.

**What are the most important challenges here at the moment?**

Funding! It may be a common refrain by many across the arts (in the UK at least!) but, after just having completed some mammoth funding bids for Creative Scotland, the reality is that we are all seeking funding from what is, in the midst of cuts, an ever diminishing source of funding. This can lead to fatigue among those in the sector with the ongoing struggle to remain solvent.

Environmental sustainability and the climate crisis is another massive challenge and how we develop sustainable arts practices is a major concern. Articulation considers the climate crisis as a fundamental part of our programme planning – to not only adopt a responsible and ethical approach but to inspire and engage our networks on pressing environmental issues. We aim to integrate environmental sustainability as part of all our processes, including the procurement and selection processes, to help us contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible outdoor arts and physical performance sector.

# OUTDOORARTSUK

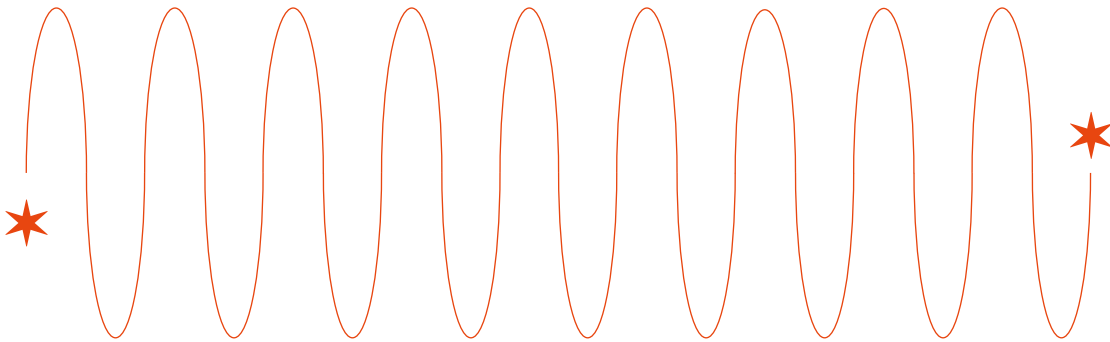
(United Kingdom)

Outdoor Arts

→ OutdoorArtsUK is a national membership and strategic organisation that aims to bring together the many diverse parts of the outdoor arts sector. OutdoorArtsUK celebrates the amazing work, talent and achievements of the individuals, companies and organisations working in this most accessible of art forms. The organisation believes that outdoor arts are a vital and unique part of our cultural ecology and offer the broadest possible access to public engagement with the arts. The work challenges and entertains; it is the most inclusive and empowering art form; it captivates communities, and inspires innovation and cohesion. The outdoor arts sector, liberated from buildings, is key to effecting social change and opening up culture with challenging, engaging and sometimes confrontational work.

OutdoorArtsUK advocates for outdoor arts across cultural, governmental, public funding and private funding arenas. The work of the organisation assists in developing the sector by providing practical information

on good working practices and offering advice and guidance for new and experienced practitioners. OutdoorArtsUK commissions reports and shares statistics to help its members make ever stronger cases for supporting the work. Through networking, OutdoorArtsUK brokers creative and beneficial connections between members. The organisation runs a programme of events to facilitate networking, idea sharing, information exchange and peer support. Once a year, it produces a large national conference for the sector to come together. Its website maintains a comprehensive festival and performance listing service of what's on, for both sectoral and public use. Members include agents, artists, artistic companies, curators, development agencies, festivals, funding bodies, higher education institutions, independent producers, local authorities, production companies, programmers, support agencies and venues. OutdoorArtsAUK is funded by Arts Council England as an Investment Principles Support Organisation (IPSO).



# THE ASSOCIATION OF CIRCUS PROPRIETORS OF GREAT BRITAIN

(UK)

Circus

→ The Association of Circus Proprietors of Great Britain is the leading-edge trade association providing leadership and professional support for the circus industry in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Established in 1932, it has, for over eighty years, promoted the interests of its members and the circus industry at large. It is recognised by the Government as the consultative body on proposed legislation or other matters which could affect that industry. Its membership is comprehensive, ranging from the major touring and resident circuses to medium-sized and small circuses and also other similar outdoor entertainments, many of which offer a niche product. Membership is open to any circus able to illustrate acceptable standards of trading in line with the ethics of the ACP and which provides the public with a circus show at an approved level and commensurate with the admission price being charged.

The ACP is the only circus organisation to be registered with the Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, to which it submits an annual report and has the approval of the Registrar to its constitution.

The ACP's mission is to promote, through its members, the highest ideals in British circus and also to raise the profile of the circus industry, while at the same time emphasising the importance of circus as an art form through the development of cultural policy. This will be achieved by encouraging the development and sharing of best practices amongst ACP members and strengthening the acceptance of the ACP at both national and local levels as the negotiating body for the circus industry. This mission statement is supported by the core belief that ACP members conduct their businesses with professionalism and integrity.

[www.circusgb.com](http://www.circusgb.com)

# THE IRISH STREET ART CIRCUS AND SPECTACLE NETWORK

(Northern Ireland)

Circus and Outdoor Arts

→ ISACS is Ireland's leading support and advocacy organisation for the development of street arts, circus and spectacle art forms. ISACS believes strongly in the value and importance of these art forms and uses every opportunity to shout from the rooftops about its members and their work. ISACS was formed as a voluntary organisation in late 2010 with the aim of creating an umbrella organisation for these art forms to represent, raise the profile of and provide a united voice for this emerging, exciting, developing and growing sector. The organisation has a diverse, dynamic and highly engaged membership that includes artists, artistic companies, curators, festivals, independent producers, production companies, programmers,

archivists, academics and enthusiasts' from across the island of Ireland and beyond.

ISACS believes in the transformative nature of these art forms and is here to champion the artists and their work. ISACS' vision is to be a leading example of an artist-first members network that supports and grows the street, circus and spectacle art forms of Ireland. Its mission is to celebrate its art forms, advocate for the policy and practical changes that will allow our art forms to flourish, grow its membership and sustain its organisation. ISACS works directly with industry experts and provides regular training, workshops, mentorship and professional support to their members.

[www.isacs.ie](http://www.isacs.ie)

## XTRAX

(UK)

Circus and Outdoor Arts

→ The XTRAX showcase was established in 1997 by Manchester International Arts (MIA) as part of the Streets Ahead Festival, Greater Manchester's outdoor festival of arts and cultural animation, led by MIA Directors Anne Tucker and Jeremy Shine. XTRAX became a separate company in 2001 and began to expand the programme and develop the scope of the showcase and the work of the company. Under the direction of Maggie Clarke, XTRAX is recognised as one of the UK's leading specialists in international outdoor arts development. With a multilingual team and a vast network of industry contacts across the UK and internationally (including festival directors, event promoters, professional institutes and artists) XTRAX has vast experience in the strategic development and distribution of outdoor arts internationally. XTRAX has delivered over 35 international performance showcase events, in partnership with

UK and international festivals and Arts Council England. It also has extensive experience of consultancy, festival and event management, programming, providing producer support to artists, international tour management and strategic support to arts organisations.

XTRAX is committed to the accessibility of outdoor arts. Festivals and events of all shapes and sizes can be used to breathe life into towns, cities, parks, villages and public spaces, and reach diverse audiences in large numbers, many of whom would not attend other kinds of arts activity. XTRAX knows that these types of events can regenerate and revitalise an area, extend tourism seasons, bring new money into the local economy and bring joy to communities across the country.

[www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk)



## CIRCUS FUTURES

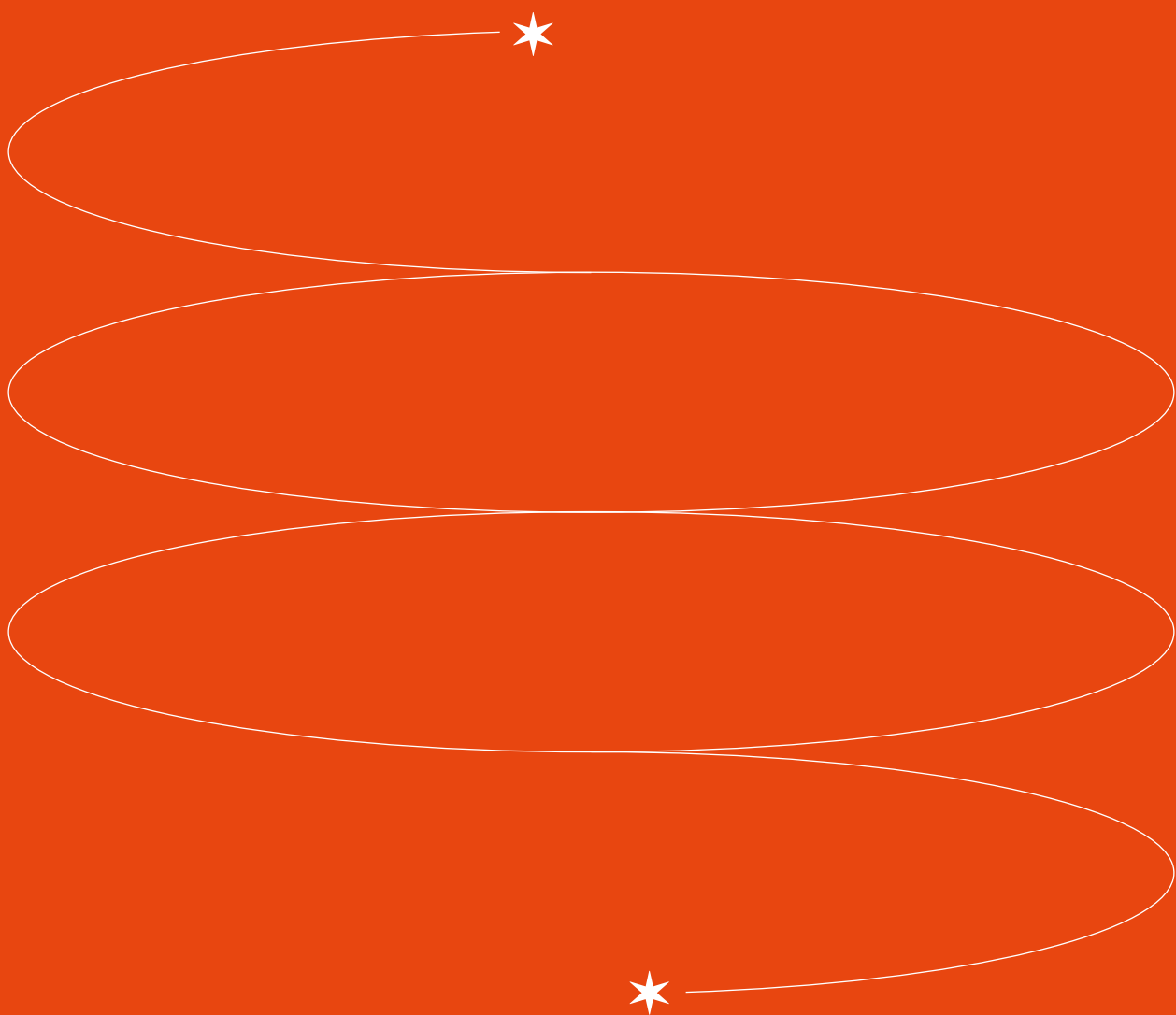
(England)

Circus

→ Circus Futures is a co-founder of the EU programme circusnext (previously titled Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe.) Pre-Brexit, the organisation was the circusnext UK & Republic of Ireland co-organiser for fifteen years. circusnext supports the next authors of contemporary circus and includes partners who run creation centres, venues and festivals. Circus Futures' activity includes mentoring, artistic labs, showcases of new work and delivering conferences

with partners including The National Theatre, Southbank Centre, London International Mime Festival, The Dublin Fringe and Improbable Theatre. Most recently, Circus Futures has been running a mentoring programme for UK and EU artists. Future plans include a UK and EU artist-focused support initiative to enable artists to make work of quality and engage with current and new audiences for circus.

[www.circusfutures.org.uk](http://www.circusfutures.org.uk)



# CASE STUDIES



1

## UPSWING

→ Upswing is a multi-award-winning UK-based contemporary circus company. Founded by Vicki Dela Amedume MBE in 2006, the company uses the human body as an expressive tool to entertain, inspire curiosity, share urgent ideas and ignite a desire to build connection. Upswing tells new stories in extraordinary ways – amplifying and celebrating the skills, creative talents and stories of diverse artists and communities. Difference and diversity fuels their work, the company believes that everyone benefits when all life experiences come together to spark new questions and ideas. Upswing’s work is not confined to theatres and festivals; it reaches people in unexpected ways, wherever they are.

In October 2023 101 Outdoor Arts hosted Upswing and a group of twelve people working

in circus for FLEX Lab, a professional development residency and retreat. This opportunity was aimed at female identifying performers and non-binary people who identify with experiences of misogyny, who are from Black African, Caribbean, Afro-Latinx and African-American backgrounds, including those of mixed-Black heritage and who are working in Circus and Outdoor Arts. There were three days of structured activity and then an optional two days for individual and group work. “What made it great was everyone’s openness and willingness to share, combined with the fact that we all had different backgrounds” FLEX Lab attendee.

Upswing is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation.

<https://upswing.org.uk/>



## GREENWICH + DOCKLANDS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL (GDIF)

→ FESTIVAL.ORG is one of the UK's leading outdoor arts producing organisations. In addition their flagship project, Greenwich + Docklands International Festival (GDIF), FESTIVAL.ORG also plays a distinctive, strategic role within the wider outdoor arts sector by devising and producing large-scale work (including ceremony-scale spectacle), by working with culturally diverse artists and by introducing new artists into the outdoors who might previously have worked in building-based contexts. FESTIVAL.ORG's year-round programme encompasses Global Streets, a national touring programme that, through a distinctive free programme of international outdoor arts, is transforming communities in ten English towns and cities in some of the least-arts engaged areas the country. FESTIVAL.ORG is also a founding member of the Without Walls and Stomping Ground commissioning consortia.

Established as a sector leader in disability arts and access, FESTIVAL.ORG is pioneering new approaches to access and audience engagement and supports D/deaf and disabled artists to make shows for outdoor environments. The organisation has been awarded Gold by Attitude is Everything on their Charter for Best Practice for GDIF, for demonstrating continued commitment to accessibility for D/deaf and disabled people.

### Changes to the planning and delivery of the festival include:

- making easy-read material about the festival available online as a download from the access page;
- making processional performances accessible using visible signage and stewarding and rehearsing processional events to ensure stewards and volunteers understood the most accessible route;
- providing BSL interpretation, captioning and audio description of performances;
- encouraging all artists and performers to look at the accessibility of their performances and providing guidance and support to help them make adaptations; and
- the organisation recruited for the newly created role of Access & Community Engagement Manager to ensure access is at the forefront of the festival going forward.

FESTIVAL.ORG is funded by Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation. In October 2023, Arts Council England announced a further £1m in National Lottery funding over the next three years for GDIF's sister project, Global Streets.

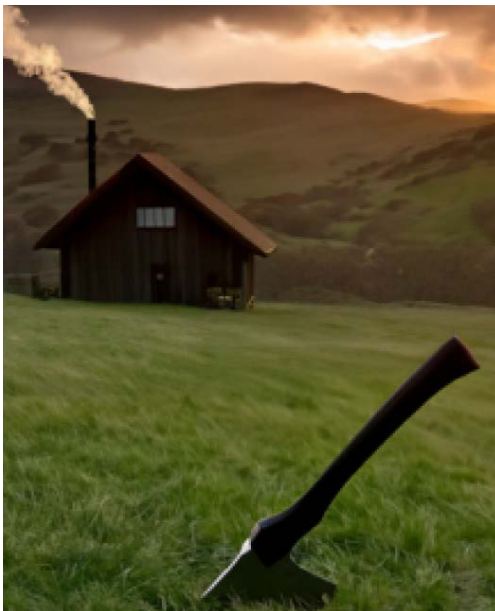
[www.festival.org](http://www.festival.org)



3

## CITRUS ARTS

→ An outdoor arts project formed around creating a place for people to gather, families to play, and for people to discuss what ‘home’ means in Pontypridd. At dusk in October 2023, a group of young people built a house on Coedpenmaen Common (Pontypridd Common), which stood as a temporary landmark for 24 hours with events for people to gather, families to play, and for interested citizens to discuss what it means to have a place in the land that they can call home. Tŷ Unnos (‘One Night House’) is part of Welsh folklore. Legend tells that if the house has a roof with a smoking chimney by dawn, the builder can live there and may farm the land around as far as they can throw an axe from the front door. Recreating the folklore as an art installation and organising this event was Pontypridd’s Citrus Arts, who supported a team of young Artworkers to create their own Tŷ Unnos. The Artworkers are young people aged between 18 and 30 from across Wales, who have had some or very little experience of working in the arts and cultural industry and have faced many barriers to developing their paths because of financial, location and access reasons. Over three months, the Artworkers have already gained invaluable first-hand experience of working on events, learning technical and building set experiences at Beyond the Border Storytelling Festival, Greenman Festival,



Eisteddfod and many local events organised by Citrus Arts in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Leading up to the build, the Artworkers had been working with people from other sectors including team of local builders Frowen Brothers, lighting technicians T&M Technical and architect Tabitha Pope together with architect students. Together they designed the ‘One Night House’. ‘It’s an amazing experience for me, and another string to my bow at a time when I’m wondering what’s next’ – Hannah Hunter, Artworker.

Tŷ Unnos was built at dusk, with a groundbreaking ceremony where audiences could see the house being built, with performances from the Citrus Arts youth circus, fire drawings, stilt walkers and live music from Cathays Inclusive Brass Band and a specially commissioned folk piece from Cerys Hafana. As the sun set on the Saturday evening, international artist Mark Anderson created a playful and hypnotic sonic experience of suspense and shifting sounds, Warning Notes, in collaboration with Liam Walsh. Tŷ Unnos is a culmination of Citrus Arts’ year-long programme of community events, classes, workshops and performances all based on the theme of ‘home’, bringing their community of Pontypridd and Rhondda Cynon Taf together. Citrus Arts is invested in its passion to develop creativity for all ages by sharing the hands-on skills and attitude that are an essential part of travelling circus life – technique, skills and showmanship – to build a solid creative community in their home county. Tŷ Unnos and Warning Notes were presented in partnership with Pontypridd Town Council and supported by Arts Council Wales, Welsh Assembly Government and the National Lottery.

- [www.citrusarts.co.uk/tyunnos](http://www.citrusarts.co.uk/tyunnos)
- [www.arts.wales/news-jobs-opportunities/group-young-people-recreate-welsh-folklore-building-house-overnight-on](http://www.arts.wales/news-jobs-opportunities/group-young-people-recreate-welsh-folklore-building-house-overnight-on)

“It takes a village to raise a circus”

## NOFIT STATE

→ In 2023, The Circus Village in Swansea (Wales) offered the biggest sector development programme for circus artists in the UK. There were three components to the project:

- practical sessions such as ‘Welsh Youth & Community Focus’, ‘Teaching & Training’, ‘Challenging Your Creative Practice & Professional Development’
- a Circus Sector Day
- the Circus Village Festival, a four-day circus festival

The Circus Village was a response driven by a partnership of circus companies and individual artists to, in some small way, try to address the void of genuinely accessible professional development opportunities for UK circus artists. The Circus Village provided a creative space: a living, learning and working environment. A place for circus artists to explore what they do, what they can learn from each other, to try and test new ways of doing things – all whilst celebrating every aspect of the circus art form, together. The practical sessions within The Circus Village 2023 were:

### Welsh Youth & Community Focus (6 days)

Developing the needs and skills of participants, this was a three-day period for young people and organisations working with young people, followed by a second three-day period for community participants and non-professional artists looking to develop technical, teaching and performance skills. Elements of the programme were delivered bilingually and there was an opportunity to create work in the Welsh language. This Welsh focus was exclusively for Wales-based artists, community participants and group leaders or teachers regardless of skill or discipline.

### Teaching & Training (3 days)

For both experienced teachers and trainers, as well as those wishing to transition into teaching, NoFit State facilitated a sharing of knowledge and skills throughout the sector in an open and fun environment. There was a focus on achieving best practices through the application of tips, techniques and a range of masterclasses from specialists in different areas of circus teaching.

### Challenging Your Creative Practice & Professional Development

Aimed at professional, established, emerging and mid-career performing circus artists and practitioners, with the support from funders, The Circus Village was completely free to attend. Travel costs and a small stipend towards expenses were paid to all, and childcare was available. Participants worked in small groups over three- or six-day intensive residencies with different directors and practitioners to inspire ideas. With provocateurs and facilitators from a wide range of different backgrounds with different skill sets, the focus was on the breadth of performative and technical abilities. Outside of the timetabled sessions, there was plenty of time built into each day to train together and try things out.

### Challenging Your Creative Practice & Professional Development strands included:

- Choreography of the Circus Body (3 days)
- Residency with a Director (2 × 3 days)
- Creative Rigging (3 days)
- Experimental Circus (3 days)
- Stage Craft & Performance (3 days)
- Developing Your Own Idea (2 × 3 days)
- Performance Protest (3 days)
- Working Outdoors (3 days)

The Circus Sector Day welcomed producers, promoters, festivals and venues from the UK and beyond to become empowered, confident and brave in programming all forms of UK circus any and everywhere, including big tops. Talks included: ‘How to bring the big top to you’, ‘Programming circus in venues’, and ‘Circus Everywhere’, with a focus on outdoor performance. In addition, artists were supported with a series of sessions from development companies including Circus Change Up, Circus Works and Circus Futures. The Circus Village Festival was a four-day circus festival run by NoFit State Circus and friends at the Recreation Ground in Swansea in April 2023.

Supported by The Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.

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## 2023 FOUR NATIONS OUTDOOR ARTS BURSARIES

→ Six artists were awarded a Four Nations Outdoor Arts Bursary to create a new performance for the outdoors. Artists from the UK and Ireland were offered the opportunity to apply for a bursary and artist development opportunity with the aim of creating a selection of new outdoor arts pieces, which would then tour a number of festivals in summer 2023. The Four Nations Outdoor Arts Bursaries 2023 are supported by Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland, Articulation, the Arts Council of Ireland, Outdoor Arts UK and ISACS. The 2023 Four Nations project started with a four-day residency in rural Argyll, Scotland in January 2023, where the chosen artists got to network and develop their creative ideas with guidance from leading mentors and the festival programmers.

### Project Partners:

- Green Man (Wales in partnership with Articulture)
- Spraoi (Ireland in partnership with ISACS)
- Surge Festival (Scotland in partnership with Articulation)

### Selected Artists from Wales

- Gaia Cicolani is an eclectic artist from Torino, Italy, currently based in Cardiff, Wales. Her background is in ballet and contemporary dance and fine art and art history.
- George Hampton Wale is an artist, designer and maker from Abergavenny, South Wales, working with sewing and textiles to create sculpture, performance and costume.

### Selected Artists from Ireland

- Édaein Samuels and Peter Moran AKA These Two Idiots, present Beach Barrage. Two Idiots arrive at the beach, both have their own perfect day in mind, but these ideas clash! What could possibly go wrong?
- Jazzville Productions are dance artist Ksenia Parkhatskaya and Irish composer and bassist David Duffy. Prepare to meet The Most Dangerous Animal in The World. A sheep, exiled and excommunicated from her island community for her adventurous spirit, ends up in the city.

### Selected Artists from Scotland/ England

Concerned at the current situation, The Doing Group are undertaking repairs to the festival site as best they can with their limited knowledge. No repair too small, no repair too big, no repair too ethereal, no repair too outside the box.

[ON AIR] is a visual radio show that explores themes of fantasy, masculinity and blaxploitation. It is co-created by Drag King performers Symoné and Porcha Present in collaboration with scenographers MHz.

Four Nations Tour 2023:

- [www.articulture-wales.co.uk/get-involved/four-nations-tour-dates-2023](http://www.articulture-wales.co.uk/get-involved/four-nations-tour-dates-2023)
- [www.articulture-wales.co.uk/introducing-the-recipient-of-the-2023-four-nations-outdoor-arts-bursaries/](http://www.articulture-wales.co.uk/introducing-the-recipient-of-the-2023-four-nations-outdoor-arts-bursaries/)

## SUPERFAN

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→ Imagine is the national organisation in Scotland that promotes, develops and celebrates theatre and dance for children and young people. Imagine has commissioned a new and exciting circus show for children by Scottish based contemporary circus company SUPERFAN, in partnership with Aberdeen Performing Arts. The new production will appear at the Edinburgh International Children's Festival in May 2024, be part of Light the Blue Festival in Aberdeen and go on tour across Scotland including in the Highlands and community venues in Strathspey.

So Far So Good is an adventurous new contemporary circus show for 3 to 6-year-olds. It explores flying, falling, steep places, precipices and the sharp rocks you come across on the way up. Created in the Cairngorms with the children who live in wild places and drawing on their lived experience of false summits, dangerous scrambles and hiking to the top, this is a show that celebrates the joy of dancing along the edge, scaling the heights and discovering the secret rest places and long views along the way.

Speaking about the commission, Ellie Dubois of SUPERFAN said: We are so delighted to be Imagine's 2024 commission and to be creating a new contemporary circus show for children aged 3 to 6 and their adults. It's really exciting for us to be creating this work in Grantown-on-Spey in the

Highlands, working in residence with a local playgroup. We can't wait to be taking the show to the Festival and on tour around Scotland including in underserved rural areas where children would normally have to travel over an hour by car to see a performance.

The Children's Festival Director Noel Jordan said: In 2019, SUPERFAN boldly explored new territory in theatre for young audiences with Little Top, a groundbreaking production that invited babies to experience the magic of circus in a specially designed miniature world. With very few companies globally working in contemporary circus for young children, Imagine is thrilled to commission a brand-new production from the company for our 2024 Festival. So Far So Good promises to be equally as compelling as their earlier work, continuing SUPERFAN's reputation for creating performances that are accessible and inviting with mesmerising physicality.

The new long-term partnership with Aberdeen Performing Arts will not only include this new production but also a co-commission for an artist to create a pop-up performance for the free Children's Festival Family Encounters opening day and Light The Blue's opening day outdoor family events. The Children's Festival on Tour is supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund.

Imagine announces circus show for early years ([whatsoninedinburgh.co.uk](http://whatsoninedinburgh.co.uk))

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This document provides a snapshot of professional-level activity related to outdoor arts and circus in the four constituent countries of the UK. It has been created using web searches to obtain publicly available information and Freedom of Information requests from funders. Thank you to all of the individuals who were kind enough to be interviewed to share their views on the topics covered.

This project has been commissioned by Circuscentrum. Circuscentrum stimulates and supports the Flemish circus sector. Its core tasks are the support and development of the sector, image building and promotion. Through tailor-made advice, training and info sessions, Circuscentrum ensures a solid foundation on which the sector can continue to build. Circuscentrum invests in communication about the sector through publications such as the quarterly Circusmagazine and the trilingual website [www.circusinflanders.be](http://www.circusinflanders.be). The organisation works together with international partners to promote circus made in Flanders and Brussels and to facilitate cross-border exchange between circus and non-circus professionals.

#### **Researcher:**

Verena Cornwall MBE. ([combarts@gmail.com](mailto:combarts@gmail.com))

Verena works across the UK and Europe as a consultant in outdoor arts and circus both contemporary and traditional. She is a founding member of the European partnerships Circostrada and circusnext. Verena sits on the board of several organisations including Waterford Spraoi (Republic of Ireland) and the Association of Circus Proprietors for Great Britain. She is the Director of Circus Futures and the Lead Researcher for The Situation of Circus in the EU Member States.

#### **Additional Resources:**

- Articulation – Scottish Outdoor Arts Index
- Articulture – Directory of Artists in Wales
- Outdoor Arts – Directory of Members and List of Festivals
- XTRA – Directory of Artists (UK)
- Without Walls – Directory of Artists and Festival Members (UK)
- Circus Change UP – A grassroots circus sector development project that aims to strengthen circus in the UK
- Circus Rigging – Information, education and research on acrobatic rigging and circus safety
- CircusWorks is made up of youth circuses and top circus professionals across the UK
- The Circus Diaries – Circus Thoughts from Circus People
- Theatre Bristol's Legacy project of resources for artists

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