



PROTEUS



TRUSTEE INFORMATION PACK

2025/26

A MESSAGE FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CEO, MARY SWAN



Dear Potential Board Member,

As you will know Proteus is recruiting for new people to join our board of trustees. As you're reading this, I'm guessing you might be intrigued by that idea but aren't really sure what a trustee does, maybe you're thinking "That sounds interesting but I'm not the sort of person who sits on the board of a theatre company." (I know how that feels - even though I'm Artistic Director of Proteus and sit on other theatre company boards, the feeling that I'm not the 'normal choice' still persists).

I hope I can say a bit more about who Proteus are, what being a trustee means, why you might be the sort of person who could do that after all – and perhaps that might help you decide whether you'd be interested in joining us.

I suppose the first thing would be to say something about Proteus and what we do, although that is quite hard to describe because we do such a ludicrously wide range of things (you can see all of them on our website). The best place to start, the thing that holds it all together, is the simple idea that the Artist and the Audience are as important as each other, and that all the work we do is a conversation between these entities.

Continued overleaf...





WHAT DOES A TRUSTEE OF PROTEUS DO?

A Trustee does attend board meetings, no getting away from that, but these are not dry, paper shuffling sessions, they're a chance to get the hot news on the company's artistic plans, hear about the latest goings on in Creation Space and interrogate, guide and offer a view on where Proteus is – are we headed in the right direction? What opportunity or pitfall have we missed? Do the ideas make sense?

Proteus has always been an organisation that exists to tell stories about the 'other', and to serve and provide a safe space for those that struggle to find those places elsewhere to participate in the Arts. Proteus Creation Space is open to everyone, really, truly: you can come and try running a class here and we will help you build it from nothing, you can start making a show here and we'll give you space and £250 to start with, you could be a band looking for a gig, rehearsal space or some mentoring and we can do that too. We will support you to be an actor – amateur or professional, - working with the Artistic Director and we'll make sure you can afford to do so. And everyone can come and see some of the best new theatre, circus, music, spoken word, visual art, cabaret and literally anything else anyone wants to put in front of an audience for an affordable price, in a safe and welcoming space.

That's why we say we do a ludicrously wide range of things with a straight face.

WE SO LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU

You'll experience, as a member of the team, the shows both made by, and visiting, Proteus Creation Space, have access to rehearsals and exhibitions, get to know both staff and board, and represent the company outside of Basingstoke.

We're not looking for specific 'skills', nor do we think your profession defines you; we are interested in you as a person. The most important quality to us is enthusiasm, we need and want individuals that are as convinced of the value and power of the arts in everyone's lives as we are, and who love the idea of the arts as a galvanising force for social change.

So, if you think you might just be the person we're looking for, come and have a coffee/tea/glass of wine and chat with me sometime and hopefully join us on this amazing journey.

Mary Swan
Associate Director & CEO



COMPANY PROFILE

Proteus is a theatre company which has made and toured high quality work for over forty years, including nationally and internationally. Seven years ago we moved into Proteus Creation Space, a home for the company's own work, that of its Associate Artists and for emergent theatre makers; it is an arts centre and cultural encounter point for our whole community.

Proteus has always made socially aware work for and with protected characteristic communities, both in performative and participatory forms; we have commissioned and toured award winning work highlighting issues such as PTSD and body dysmorphia, have created cross art form public art inventions and installations looking at issues of domestic violence and have collaborated with nationally and internationally recognised circus and outdoor arts companies to create large scale free events in North Hampshire.

We have consistently cast and collaborated with Artists from protected characteristic groups, particularly in our rural touring work for families, ensuring the visibility of ethnically diverse and disabled performers. Our work has been seen and produced across the UK, and as far afield as New York and India, and our physical and kinaesthetic techniques academically analysed in the 2015 American Journal of Theater Criticism.



COMPANY PROFILE

Proteus works with young people to make work via our youth theatre groups ranging in age from 7 - 17, and supports them to engage with the professional Artists we collaborate with including circus and movement specialists.

We have a firm commitment to Artist development, with three Associate Artists in each year. We have focused on drawing these Artists from the Global majority and working class backgrounds. We co-produce work with our Associates alongside offering a small bursary, rehearsal space and mentoring support in a wide range of areas (inc.fundraising, producing, budgeting, space). We also support Artists in the visual and performing arts via our three onsite studio spaces and offsite space, Springpark House, currently hosting another ten visual artists and six performance Artists and companies including Levantes Dance and Hot Coals Theatre Company. Our Performance Lab programme has enabled a range of Artists to create performance work in our space, and has included Circus companies; Upswing, Ockham's Razor, Oddly Moving; theatre makers and companies including Julia Donaldson, Annie Siddons and dance artists; Luke Brown and Rhiannon Faith.

The next five years is an incredibly exciting time for us, Proteus is on the verge of another regeneration, seeing us consolidate our position as a major contemporary touring theatre company and midwife to the work of the next generation of theatre makers.

STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

These aims are specifically designed to enable Proteus to deliver its Mission and Values through the course of this business plan.

Aim 1	<i>Proteus will ensure our core audiences benefit from a wide range of Artistic visions and life experiences</i>
Aim 2	<i>Proteus will invest in its own artistic and professional development, pushing the boundaries of its artistic practice in order to tell bolder stories</i>
Aim 3	<i>Proteus will create the conditions to achieve its ambitions, ensuring the organisation is sustainable and fit for purpose.</i>
Aim 4	<i>Proteus will gain a better understanding of who our audiences are, and who they could be, in order to have richer conversations with the communities we serve.</i>

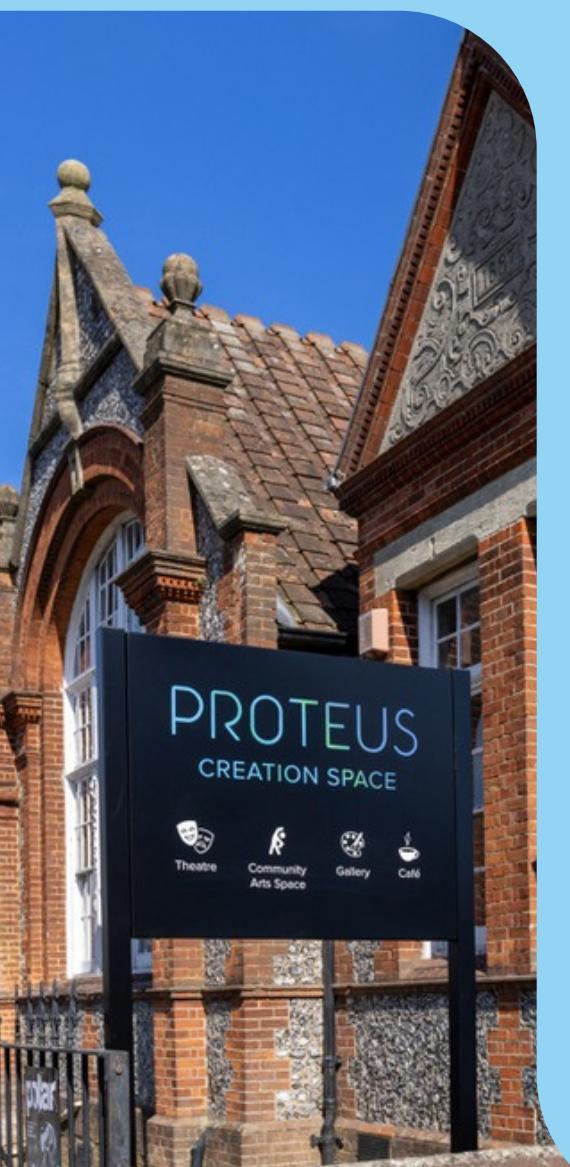


INTRODUCTION & HISTORY

Proteus was established in 1981, emerging from the Haymarket Theatre 'Horseshoe Company' touring arm. Like most companies born in that period it was forged with a passionate belief in high quality performance being available to the many, not the few, and that anyone can be an artist.

Proteus became a small scale, largely rural touring company. The work toured to venues mainly in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire up until 2006. In the 1990's Proteus began to create more participatory work for communities and schools. The company enjoyed firm relationships with schools in its locality throughout the 90's and early 2000's, as many similar organisations did, resulting in long term commissions for issue based Theatre -In -Education work running over several years which provided an important income stream for the company. However as the focus in Education shifted and the funding to schools and agencies commissioning this work disappeared, Proteus shifted its focus again.

Throughout the 2000's to the present day, the company has worked in a participatory setting with adults and children with pan-disabilities and with discreet communities on one-off, sometimes large scale projects.



OUR HISTORY CONT..

In 2005 Mary Swan, current Artistic Director and CEO joined Proteus from the New Wolsey Theatre and immediately began touring work nationally to small scale venues, with occasional work made for mid-scale venues. Proteus also began taking work to festivals and collaborating with diverse art forms. Her 2006 production of 'Peter Pan' saw Proteus utilising aerial techniques for the first time and the introduction of circus languages into the company's work. In 2009 the company was invited to the 'Brits Off Broadway' Festival in New York for a residency of their acclaimed production of 'The Elephant Man' which became the subject of a paper on physical theatre in the American Journal of Drama and Theater Criticism in 2015 and is used in contemporary theater teaching at the University of Tennessee.



“Whenever we come to Proteus we are always amazed at the quality of experience. Keep up the hard work and delivery of such amazing and very much needed theatre experiences for all children. Bravo! “



OUR MISSION

Proteus is a touring theatre company and arts & community centre; we tell stories (and support others to do so) which aim to engender empathy for the 'other'.

OUR VISION

We believe that theatre enables us to interpret our contemporary world and our roles within it

VALUES Our core values are to make theatre that is, or adheres to the principles of:

IS INCLUSIVE

For Proteus this is not a token word - the ability to make art truly inclusive is central to our mission and ethos, and by 'inclusive' we are not simply talking about matters of ability or geographical location, we are talking about a myriad of factors that can exclude individuals or whole communities from experiencing or participating in culture.

We are also talking about an inclusivity of art forms in the company's work. Never confined by convention, Proteus has always collaborated and engaged in a vast diversity of artistic practice, and through the support of a range of artists working within the Proteus Creation Space, this willful cross-pollination of artistic practice will be central to the artistic development of the company over the next five years.

IS DYNAMIC

Proteus has purposefully remained a 'small' company at its core. Not small in ambition, influence, breadth and impact of its work; instead we have instead chosen to retain the many virtues that being a 'small' company bring. The ability to react quickly to the changing needs and focus of audiences and communities, keeping our planning structured but not restrictive - allowing us to create work that grows from conversations and encounters with other artists, audiences and participants, and crucially, keeping administrative and non-art focused costs as low as possible.

IS COLLABORATIVE

We are committed to our vision of creating a safe space for empathy amongst difference, whether that be in a performance context or in the Creation Space building itself; amongst Artists, participants or audience. Our core artistic methodology is devising theatre and these principles are applied throughout our work; including commissioning processes and interpretation of existing texts. We are committed to facilitating and empowering people to exchange ideas, views, and practices – a rare opportunity in an increasingly partisan atmosphere. For Proteus that leads us to hold principles of free and open collaboration as one of our core values; encouraging Artists to have agency to utilise new practices in their work, audiences to experience cultural and political debate through performance and for participants to encounter uncharted artistic experiences.

HAS INTEGRITY

Key to our vision of engendering empathy for the 'other' through our work has been the importance of integrity to our artistic and business practice. Proteus has always been committed to the importance of authenticity on our work. We believe the stories we tell, on any scale and for any age of audience, must come from a place of knowledge and respect. Proteus takes decisions in every area of its work from an ethical perspective and aims to support the creative process by Artists from all backgrounds and at every stage of their artistic journeys. We are also committed to this principle in an artistic context, ensuring that our work is of the highest artistic standard and is suited to the scale and context it is being presented in.

IS CONFOUNDING

Proteus has always confounded convention. Like a willful child, the company has defied characterisation for all of its existence. This is the key to over forty years of success. Never completely fitting one box, Proteus has always looked to move forward; creating sometimes radical, some-times experimental; work on larger scales and widening the influence of the company, from national to international and collaborating with an ever increasing range of partners. Proteus is un-afraid to break artistic convention to tell a great story.



JOB DESCRIPTION: BOARD MEMBER

We actively encourage people from a variety of backgrounds with different skills, experiences and stories to join us and influence and develop our working practice. All applications will be assessed on merit. Any candidate who self-identifies as D/deaf, disabled or neurodivergent, as a person of colour, and/or as genderqueer, and who feels they have something to offer as a board member, is guaranteed an interview, as these areas are under-represented among our current trustees. We are fully committed to diversity and inclusion and want to practice what we preach. If there are some elements of being a trustee that you're not sure you meet, please apply anyway or get in touch to have a conversation. We're interested in the whole person and we help new trustees to develop skills on the job.

Being a Trustee of a charity like Proteus is a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. You'll meet Artists from all areas of the industry and from a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences. You'll meet and get to know the Proteus staff and other Board members – growing and learning alongside them, and most importantly you'll help shape the future of one of the most exciting arts organisations in the South, creating work for stages across the UK & beyond and serving local communities with high quality art provision.

The purpose of the board is: to ensure the fulfilment of the company's objectives; to determine the pace and style of the company's development; to safeguard the assets of the company; to act as a responsible employer of staff; and to establish and promote the company's role within the community.

WHAT ARE BOARD MEMBERS REQUIRED TO DO?

Acting as a Trustee is a voluntary, unpaid position. The role also carries some legal responsibilities. You can read more about these on the government's website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved>.

ALL PROTEUS TRUSTEES ARE ASKED TO COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING:

- To attend four Board meetings a year, usually on zoom, for a minimum term of three years.
- We also have a one day board retreat each year which is held in person, in Basingstoke. We are able to cover reasonable travel expenses for trustees who would otherwise be unable to attend the board retreat and always provide a free lunch and refreshments on the day.
- To attend Proteus performances and events when possible
- To help at fundraising activities when required and when possible
- To provide advice and guidance to staff as reasonably required

In addition, Trustees are expected to:

- Commit to the mission and values of Proteus
- Understand and accept the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of being a Trustee
- Help to make sure that Proteus is well governed and complies with its constitutional and charitable objectives
- Act as ambassadors for Proteus and, where possible, open doors and help the charity to grow its networks and contacts
- Actively contribute to Proteus' plans and strategic direction and contribute to ideas and contacts in developing our network of partners, supporters and donors



BOARD MEMBERS ARE REQUIRED

1. To develop, monitor and annually review the company's business plan and policies, company profile and artistic policy / values, and to oversee their implementation by staff.
2. To approve the annual budget and funding resources available and to ensure prudent financial management by keeping proper accounts and an annually produced audited statement. To play an active role in helping with fundraising where appropriate.
3. To agree a cycle of meetings to service the board efficiently and to attend the Board Meetings and Sub-Groups (where a nominated member of), and review the reports and information provided to ensure that full and adequate information is available to consider the progress of the company. To discuss any other requirements that would help a full appreciation of operational or financial performance.
4. To establish a system of communications, support and delegated decision-making so that urgent decisions can be made and acted upon between meetings.
5. To co-opt additional members with specialist knowledge and skills as required and to establish working groups on specific issues when appropriate.

6.	To act as directors of the company and charity trustees, ensuring the company operates in accordance with company and charitable law.
7.	To ensure that all company assets and property are well managed, that there is adequate insurance and all health and safety requirements are maintained.
8.	To delegate day-to-day operational activity to the executive officers of the company.
9.	To define and review employment policies and procedures and to make decisions on staff employment by approving the staffing structure, participating in the recruitment procedure for senior management and forming the final appeal panel in grievance and disciplinary cases. To agree the job descriptions, person specifications and terms of employment of senior management and, in outline only, for other staff.
10.	To act as an ambassador for the company, promoting its activities and needs to the private, public and voluntary sectors to enhance its profile within the community, and attending at least one production/ event per year, and volunteer for at least one event per year. To act as a listening post to provide information regarding significant events which may be of benefit to the company.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Stage one – meeting in the office with Artistic Director and/or General Manager

Stage two – meeting with at least one board member and other member of the staff team

Stage three – invited to observe a board meeting and voted on by board member who has met with potential board member previously. The board member may then be “buddied up” with another board member.

Stage four – Attend at least one guest night or piece of received work in the first season of membership, and volunteer at one event in first year of board membership

Stage five – opportunity to attend one of the following:

- A rehearsal or day of R&D
- A day out on tour

PROTEUS