

Board Recruitment Pack

formidAbility

Artistry unleashed



<https://www.formidability.org>



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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About formidAbility



formidAbility is a ground-breaking disability- and female-led opera company. Our trailblazing work putting accessibility at the heart of the creative process is attracting interest from a number of major arts organisations. Inspired by her work singing with Paraorchestra and her experience as a sight-impaired opera singer, Joanne Roughton-Arnold (soprano) joined with Holly Mathieson (conductor) to found the company in 2019. The passionate belief that opera has the potential to reach many more people if we better reflect the diversity of the general public is at the core of the company's work. One in five people in the UK identify as disabled, but we don't see anywhere near that number on stage, in creative teams or in opera company governance.

We seek to lead by example: engaging a healthy mix of disabled and non-disabled professional artists to create powerful work of the highest calibre that speaks to as wide a demographic as possible, weaving accessibility for our audiences throughout our productions. We believe that by placing accessibility front and centre and giving it artistic life of its own, we enrich the experience of all artists and audiences, breaking down barriers and challenging perceptions about disability and inclusion in the arts. We choose not to make work focusing solely on disability; this would risk ghettoising disabled artists & audiences. Instead, we make art for everyone, raising the profile of disabled artists to the wider profession and shining a light on the talent and skills that have gone unnoticed for far too long.

Our Work So Far

2015-17 Iris Dreaming

In 2015 with support from Creative New Zealand, Joanne commissioned **Iris Dreaming** from Dame Gillian Whitehead and Fleur Adcock CNZM OBE. She produced and performed the world premiere as part of the 2016 Grimeborn Festival at London's Arcola Theatre, followed by the New Zealand premiere at the 2017 Adam Chamber Music Festival.

"An unforgettable premiere... A superb operatic performance that deserves to be repeated throughout New Zealand."

Margaret Hannigan, Nelson Mail

This was Joanne's first foray into producing and commissioning new work, setting her on the path that would eventually lead to the founding of formidAbility.



Click here to watch our film:

[GILLIAN WHITEHEAD: Iris Dreaming on Vimeo](#)

2019: Hotspur/Pierrot Lunaire

formidAbility's first production was created in collaboration with Signdance Collective International. This was a double-bill pairing **Hotspur** by Dame Gillian Whitehead and Fleur Adcock CNZM OBE with Schoenberg's iconic **Pierrot Lunaire** in a world-first merging of opera and signdance.

"Dancers Isolte Avila and David Bower added beauty and emotional resonance to Hotspur and Pierrot Lunaire respectively, in minimalist, intense settings directed and designed by Sara Brodie... formidAbility has already unearthed something of great promise for opera's future.

Charlotte Valori, MY THEATRE MATES



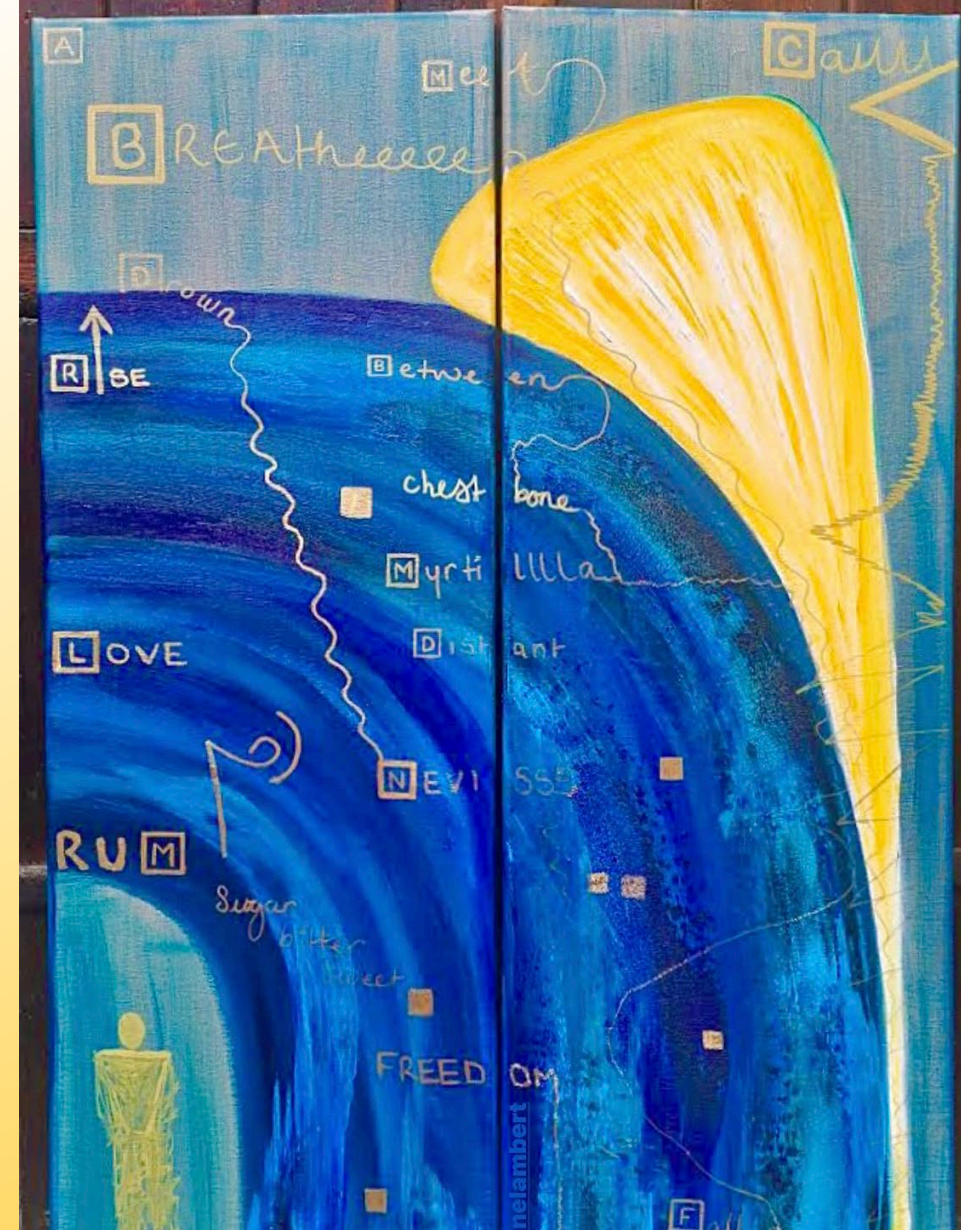
Click here to watch our trailer:

[HOTSPUR | PIERROT LUNAIRE: promo film](#)

2020: The Bridge Between Breaths

A COVID Emergency Grant from Arts Council England enabled formidAbility to continue creating during 2020. We commissioned Gareth Churchill and Hafsah Aneela Bashir to write a new opera that reflected something of the challenging times we were all living through at the start of the pandemic. **The Bridge Between Breaths**, centred around the felling of Colston's statue, was the result.

We held five days of research and development to explore the new work and how we might use visual art to make opera more accessible for D/deaf audiences. Our work was broadcast online as part of 2020 Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival.



Watch our trailer:

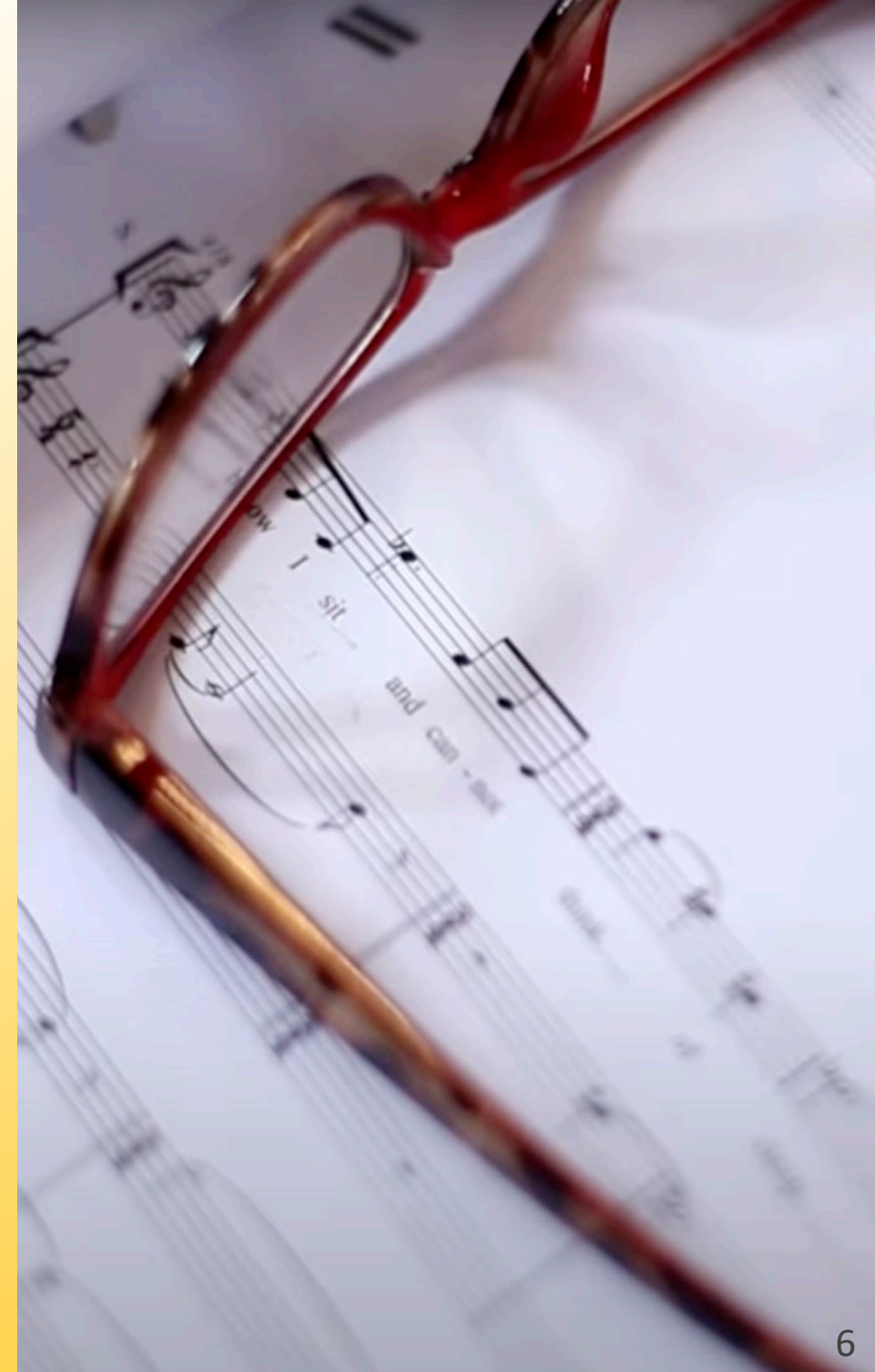
[The Bridge Between Breaths](#)



2021: Time to reflect

As a very new company, formidAbility wasn't eligible to apply to the Cultural Recovery Fund, so the second year of the pandemic was a quiet one for us. However this created time and space for reflection and planning, laying the groundwork for prudent organisational development and putting us in a good position to move forward post-pandemic with new creative projects and partners. Conversations with other arts organisations throughout 2021 met with enthusiasm for our work and interest in developing partnerships.

In the autumn, Joanne was one of six mentees selected for the pilot 3-month long Engender x We.Grow mentoring scheme, focusing on the intersectionality of her roles as freelance opera singer and Creative Director of formidAbility, and how they combine to strengthen her advocacy for inclusion in the opera industry. We are building a strong relationship with Arts Council England; the clear alignment of our company ethos with ACE's "Let's Create" strategy makes it clear that with the right support formidAbility is in prime position to take its place front and centre of the movement for greater inclusion in the arts.



Current Project

formidAbility

Song in Sign (working title)

In this project we are exploring a new way of making music accessible to D/deaf audiences while adding a visual expression of poetry and music for everyone. Two singers, a pianist and two British Sign Language performers will collaborate as equals, synchronising the phrasing of song and sign as intense communication between signers, musicians and audience to create a merging of art forms that spans the D/deaf and hearing experiences. The Project is divided into two phases:

Phase One: April - August 2022

We have commissioned a new 15-minute work for two singers, pianist and two BSL performers based on Oscar Wilde's **The Happy Prince**. Max Chase has adapted the text and Rylan Gleave is writing the music, embedding BSL into the musical score. We will hold six days of research and development in July to work on **The Happy Prince** and explore new ways of collaborating across art forms, culminating in an informal sharing of our work for invited industry guests. This phase also includes organisational and professional development to support our creative work.

Song in Sign Phase Two: September 2022 - March 2023

Phase Two will build on the work completed and lessons learned in Phase One. The major focus will be the planning, rehearsal and delivery of a tour to five of the UK's major music colleges and conservatoires, but will also include further organisational and professional development. All the institutions we approached have responded with enthusiasm to our proposed visit, making firm offers of financial commitments and dates between January and March 2023. Each venue will host a two-day visit to include:

- A public concert of art song and duets given by the artists from Phase One, with Rylan Gleave's new work at the heart of the programme. The entire concert will be signed by our two BSL performers, collaborating as equals with singers and pianist in an embodiment of our ethos of creative accessibility.
- A workshop given by our team of artists for students at each institution to share our approach and explore how they might make their own work more inclusive.

We are preparing an ACE Project Grant application to fund this phase, with significant match funding already in place.

Art Song (Working Title)

We plan to move on to this new project after the completion of Song in Sign, shifting our focus to visually impaired audiences and turning audio description into the main event.



Who We'd like to join us

We are looking for up to three individuals with a passion for inclusion and a desire to contribute to arts-based social change. We want to build a team of people with the energy and experience to help an arts organisation in its formative years embed in the UK arts ecosystem and scale-up in a prudent and lasting way.

In line with our primary artistic mission, we want our board to reflect the diversity and inclusion we work so hard to present onstage. We would be excited to receive applications from people from communities currently underrepresented in the opera industry, especially those identifying as D/deaf or disabled, LGTBQI+ and people from the Global Majority. Please let us know how we can facilitate your application or attendance, any access requirements you have, or if you are concerned that something impedes your capacity to apply. We will do everything we can to mitigate the issues and welcome you to the organisation.

From within the applicants, we hope to appoint a new chairperson with a strong grasp of our core values to steer the company forward. However, we are open to different ways of working and will be happy to discuss options such as rotating the role of Chair among the Directors so that the time commitment is shared more equally.

While we welcome expressions of interest from people with creative backgrounds, it is not a prerequisite, but we do hope you will have one of the following skills to help govern the next stage of our development:

- Fiscal governance and fundraising
- Arts strategy and planning
- HR
- Legal compliance

The successful candidate(s) will:

- Play a full role as a Board Director in deciding the company's strategy and overseeing its implementation, promoting its activities and safeguarding its reputation
- Sit on sub-committees, as necessary
- Ensure the organisation's activities are compliant with financial and legal obligations
- Advise the Creative Director and staff on their short and long-term financial strategy
- Participate in negotiations with the Musicians' Union and Equity, and advise us of current best practice for freelance recruitment and contracting
- Regularly review the policies of the organisation, including Safeguarding, Sustainability and Equalities
- Help us to scale the organisation while retaining our core values and commitment to excellent art

In addition, The Chair will:

- Chair Board meetings
- Lead on the development of formidAbility's Board
- Represent the organisation at events as appropriate



Term

Directors serve on a rotational basis. According to our Articles of Association, at every Annual General Meeting one third of the Board of Directors must retire, the longest serving retiring first. However, any retiring member of the Board of Directors may immediately stand for re-election.

Remuneration

This is an unpaid voluntary position, but expenses such as childcare, travel or personal access costs will be paid upon presentation of receipts.

Location

Online with a planned in-person annual Away Day (venue to be confirmed)

Time Commitment

- Four Board Meetings a year, one of which is our Annual General Meeting.
- Maintain a presence at performances and Research and Development events, as your time and circumstances allow.

You do not need to have prior board or executive experience – we will provide a full induction to the Board’s activities and Director training on appointment, as required.

We view the welcoming of new Directors to our Board as an opportunity to train and induct all Board members so that we can create an inclusive, dynamic and effective board to take formidAbility forward and grow into its potential to be a trailblazing example to the opera profession.

We’ll meet with you (online or in person) to discuss what training and support you would like in order to fulfil your role effectively, and what type of development opportunities the board might do together.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a Board meeting in an advisory capacity (without voting rights) before making a formal commitment. You will also be invited to attend the informal sharing at the conclusion of our Research and Development period to be held in London in July.

Application Process

Please send a CV and covering letter (no more than two sides of A4) or a video (no more than 5 minutes duration) telling us why you'd like to join us as a Director and what skills and experience you could bring to our organisation. Please bear in mind that our Creative Director is partially sighted, so sending material in an accessible format would be appreciated We'd love to hear about:

- Why our work and being a Director of formidAbility interests you
- What you think you could bring to the role of Director
- What your passions are and what inspires you

Please send your application to joanne@formidability.org with Director Application in the subject line. Please also let us know of any access requirements that you may have. Please complete our Equal Opportunities Monitoring form [here](#)

Closing date: 9:00am on Monday 27th June 2022

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted by Monday 11th July 2022

Key Dates

- **Monday 27th June:** Applications close
- **Monday 4th July:** Shortlisted candidates contacted
- **Monday 11th - Friday 15th July:** Informal interviews with shortlisted candidates (online or in person)
- **Friday 22nd July:** informal sharing at the conclusion of our Research and Development period (London)
- **Friday 29th July:** Board Meeting with shortlisted applicants in attendance (online)
- **Friday 28th October:** Board Meeting with new Directors formally in place (date subject to Directors' availability)

