

ALEXANDER WHITEHEAD

Confidential Position Specification



ARTSCLUB
ALIVE ON THREE STAGES

Board Director

MARCH 2015



POSITION SPECIFICATON

Position	Board Director
Location	Vancouver, British Columbia
Reporting Relationship	Board Chair
Peer Relationship	Board of Directors
Direct Reports	Artistic Managing Director Executive Director
Website	www.artsclub.com

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Based in Vancouver, British Columbia, the Arts Club of Vancouver Theatre Society (“Arts Club” or “the Company”) is one of the largest, year-round non-commercial professional theatre companies operating in Canada.¹ The Company produces classic and contemporary international theatre, including an emphasis on new Canadian play development, on three stages in Vancouver and across British Columbia through its annual touring season. The Company operates within an annual budget of \$14 million and derives earned revenue through subscription and single ticket sales, facilities rentals, and the Backstage Lounge (a restaurant and popular venue for live music). Additional revenue is generated through private sector fundraising and public sector grants from municipal, provincial, and federal agencies.

History

The Arts Club of Vancouver was formed in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. In 1964, under the leadership of Yvonne Firkins, the Arts Club Theatre Company staged its first production, *Light Up the Sky*, in a converted gospel hall on Seymour Street (now home to the Vancouver International Film Centre). For 27 years the Company operated from this 250-seat theatre which launched the careers of notable Canadian acting talent such as Michael J. Fox, Bruce Greenwood, Janet Wright, Nicola Cavendish, and Brent Carver. In 1972, the popular production of *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well* brought international attention to the young company. The Arts Club was also instrumental in developing the early work of Canadian playwrights such as Michel Tremblay, Carol Bolt, and Morris Panych.

In 1972, Bill Millerd joined the Company, and under his 40-plus years of leadership as Artistic Managing Director, the Company has experienced tremendous growth, both artistically and operationally. The Company opened the Granville Island Stage in 1979 and, four years later, the Revue Stage located next door in the Granville Island Market. With the closure of the Seymour Street venue in 1981, the artistic and administrative functions of the Company moved to the Granville Island location. In 1998, following a successful public campaign to save the historic Stanley Theatre, the Arts Club re-opened their flagship venue, now known as the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, with the production of *Swing*, featuring Michael Bubl .

In late 2013, the Arts Club and Bard on the Beach embarked on an ambitious \$12.5 million capital campaign to open a new facility on West 1st Avenue in the Olympic Village area that will

¹ Determined by scope of the Company’s year-round operations and annual operating budget when benchmarked against its Category peers with similar operating models.



house a 250-seat theatre, rehearsal space, office spaces, and costume shops for both companies. Once complete in late 2015, the Company will close the Revue Stage and relocate most administration functions to the new facility. The City of Vancouver will own and lease the space and has committed \$7 million towards capital infrastructure improvements. The balance is being raised from the private sector through corporate partnerships and individual donors. This new facility represents an opportunity for the Company to initiate creative new programming and community engagement opportunities.

Current Operations

Primary

Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage (“the Stanley”) – The historic 650-seat proscenium stage is a subscription-based house and serves as the flagship venue for the Company. Built in 1930 as a movie theatre, the venue closed in 1991 and was put up for sale. In 1994, the Stanley Theatre Society was formed to preserve the theatre as a performance space, and following a successful fundraising campaign the Stanley opened in 1998. In 2005, Industrial Alliance Pacific Life Insurance Company made a \$1.5 million donation and assumed naming rights. Six productions are staged each season in the Stanley, and past celebrated musical productions include *Les Miserables*, *Hairspray*, *The Producers*, *Dreamgirls*, and *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*; and dramas *Glengarry Glen Ross* (starring Eric McCormack), *Clybourne Park*, *Doubt*, and *Rabbit Hole*.

Granville Island Stage – This 430-seat venue opened in 1979 as part of the federal government’s plan to redevelop Granville Island into a people-friendly, multi-purpose urban destination that now includes a large public market, a marina, a boutique hotel, and several artisan boutique shops. The recently-renovated Granville Island Stage facility includes the theatre, the Backstage Lounge, rehearsal space, and administration offices. Programming features proven works from the international repertoire, small-scale musicals, and re-mounts of popular productions from previous seasons.

Revue Stage – This intimate, 198-seat theatre serves as the Company’s incubator for new Canadian play development. Opened in 1983 as a cabaret theatre, the Revue Stage space was leased to Vancouver TheatreSports League from 1997 to 2009. In 2010, the Revue Stage was renovated and re-opened as the Company’s third performance venue hosting a four-play season of new work from Canadian playwrights. It also serves as the venue for the ReAct festival, the Musical Theatre Intensive for Teens, and the LEAP student playwriting program.

Arts ClubOn Tour – The Arts Club is one of only a few remaining Category A companies with an active touring program. Each season the Company tours up to three productions from previous seasons throughout the Greater Vancouver Regional District, Vancouver Island, and the interior of British Columbia. Popular productions such as *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *Mom’s the Word*, and *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* have been enjoyed by thousands of audience members across British Columbia.

Secondary

In addition to nearly \$8 million² earned through subscription and single ticket sales, the Arts Club generates operating revenues from facility rentals and through the year-round operation of

² Source: 2013/2014 Annual Report.



the Backstage Lounge³. Located adjacent to the Granville Island Stage, the Backstage Lounge is a popular destination for audiences attending productions at the Granville Island and Revue Stages, and it is one of the few remaining venues in Vancouver devoted to presenting live music on a nightly basis.

New Play Development

The Company's commitment to new Canadian plays originates from Artistic Managing Director Bill Millerd's passion for developing Canadian artists. During the Company's 50 years of operation, over 75 Canadian plays have debuted at the Arts Club, including works from Morris Panych, Daniel MacIvor, Nicola Cavendish and Michele Riml. Under the leadership of Mr. Millerd and a full-time Literary Manager, New Play Development receives support through the following programs:

ReAct: New Plays in Progress – Each season the Arts Club produces live public readings of plays in progress as a key step to bring stories from the page to the stage. The ReAct festival involves playwrights, actors, directors, dramaturges, and audiences in the process of hearing and critiquing plays in the advanced development stage.

Silver Commissions – Established with the support of two patrons with the vision to support new play development, the Silver Commission Project provides funding to established British Columbian playwrights to develop new plays for future production by the Arts Club. Since its inception in 2006, the Silver Commissions Project has developed six world premiers on Arts Club stages.

LEAP Playwriting Intensive – Learning Early About Playwriting (LEAP) is a program that provides young playwrights with an interactive opportunity to learn how to write a play. Each season students are invited to apply to join one of three levels of classes and develop their play ideas with the support of a professional playwright. The students' work culminates in a public reading performed by professional actors.

The Five Pillars

In the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, the Arts Club identified five pillars to form the basis of the Company's strategic plan for future operations:

Artistic Development – The Arts Club continues to serve audiences with high quality productions on three stages; an active touring program; and a commitment to developing new Canadian plays and playwrights. A core value is the development, encouragement and engagement of local actors, playwrights, designers, craftspeople and directors.

Facilities Renewal – The Company has invested heavily in the renovations of the Granville Island Stage and the Revue Stage to enhance the experience for audiences and artists. New funding is being sought for further improvements to the Granville Island Stage in addition to the capital campaign for the new West 1st facility.

Community Engagement – Through youth programs such as LEAP and the Musical Theatre Intensive; improved physical access to venues; and the development of youth and senior audiences, the Company continues to invest in opportunities to engage an increasingly diverse

³ Net contribution from the Backstage Lounge was approximately \$300,000 during the 2013/2014 fiscal year. Source: 2013/2014 Annual Report.



community of stakeholders. The recently completed 50th Anniversary season provided the Arts Club with a high profile opportunity to connect further with the community.

Profile Enhancement – With the three main stages detached from each other, the Company continues to employ an ongoing branding strategy to ensure all opportunities and interactions arising from operating three theatres are explored and maximized for the overall benefit of the organization. *Alive on Three Stages* reinforces the diverse work the Company produces on its stages.

Sustainability – Refers to the current and future capacity to reduce risk and adequately finance the enhanced artistic vision of the Company. Increased revenues in recent years from higher subscription sales, private sector fundraising, and proceeds from the endowment⁴ have contributed to an operating cash reserve and the ongoing financial stability of the Arts Club. The other key area under sustainability is human resources. Investment in professional development for staff will increase overall productivity and improve retention. Identifying key needs in skills acquisition will allow the Company to strategically address opportunities and plan for succession.

The ACTC Board is in the process of developing its next strategic plan to take effect from 2016 forward.

THE OPPORTUNITY

In response to the recent conclusion of term appointments, the Arts Club is seeking up to five qualified individuals interested in joining the Board of Directors. Appointments may be staggered to ensure a balance of experienced and new Board members at any given time. The successful candidates share, with the Chair and members of the board, the responsibilities of governing the organization and formulating policies enabling the board to make responsible decisions towards achieving the financial stewardship of the Company in accordance with the strategic plan set by the Board of Directors.

Key Responsibilities Include:

Governance

- Reviewing existing policies and developing new policies as required to ensure the efficient and ethical operations of the Company
- Identifying and evaluating the risks to the Company's people (clients, staff, management, volunteers), property, finances, goodwill, and image and implement measures to control risks
- Ensuring that the board and management understand their respective roles and providing management with the infrastructure and support to successfully execute the Company's strategic plan
- Attending board and committee meetings to the best of their ability

Strategic Planning

- Participating in the development of the overall strategic plan that sets the vision, mission, and objectives related to the artistic and business performance of the Company
- Providing oversight to management that ensures the effective execution of the strategic plan



- Monitoring the overall performance and activities of the corporation, and identifying any material developments and significant emergent issues

Financial Oversight

- Understanding the Company's financial statements, operating and capital budgets, audit, and risk mitigation strategies
- Share responsibility for prudent management of the organization's finances

Fund Development

- Contributing to the fundraising goals of the Company at a personal level by maintaining an annual membership in the Artistic Director's Circle and contributing to special fundraising campaigns to the best of their ability
- Attending the Company's fundraising special events and supporting the external fundraising activities through networking and facilitating introductions between Fund Development staff and potential corporate partners and individual donors

Community relations/advocacy

- Serving as an ambassador of the Company to current and future external stakeholders

DEFINING SUCCESS

The successful candidates will join a dedicated and passionate Board of Directors committed to staging and developing stimulating, quality theatre for the enrichment of the community. Critical success factors for the Board Directors within the first 12 months include:

- Developing a deep understanding of the Company, its operations, and internal culture by attending play performances, artistic programs, and special fundraising events
- Building trusting relationships with the Board of Directors, the Artistic Director, Executive Director, and senior staff
- Establishing relationships with relevant external stakeholders, including private and public funders and peers within the local arts community
- Maintaining an ongoing understanding of current trends in Canadian non-profit professional theatre and the not-for-profit sector

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE / QUALIFICATIONS

Board Directors are experienced professionals with an understanding of the not-for-profit sector, preferably with experience in non-commercial professional theatre or similar performing arts disciplines. He/she has a passion for the arts and professional theatre in particular, and an understanding of board governance principles. Candidates considering this position should have all or most of the following experience and qualifications:

- A passion for live theatre and a desire to contribute to the ongoing success of one of Canada's leading arts organizations
- Proven experience as an executive or volunteer of an organization with an operating budget in excess of \$10 million



- Knowledge of leadership and management principles as they relate to the not-for-profit charitable sector in Canada
- Experience working collaboratively to develop and implement a strategic plan in alignment with the trends and conditions of the community and the organization's mission statement
- Past or current experience in one or more of the following areas: financial management, leadership, business planning, human resources, fund development, and communications
- Understanding of the entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges of operating a high-profile arts organization

Personal characteristics

- **Think Strategically:** Assesses options and actions based on trends and conditions in the environment, and the vision and values of the organization
- **Adaptability:** Demonstrate a willingness to be flexible, versatile and tolerant in a changing work environment while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency
- **Ethical conduct:** Understand ethical behaviour and business practices and ensure that own behaviour and the behaviour of others is consistent with these standards and aligns with the values of the organization
- **Communicate Effectively:** Summarize complex issues and speak, listen and write in a clear, thorough and timely manner using appropriate and effective communication tools and techniques
- **Patience and Empathy:** Understand at all times the point of view of others
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Develop new and unique ways to improve operations of the organization and to create new opportunities

EDUCATION

The successful candidates will have completed an undergraduate degree in their professional field or discipline.

COMPENSATION AND COMMITMENT

The Arts Club is a not-for-profit registered charity and therefore Board Directors receive no compensation.

Board Directors must be prepared to lead by example and support the Company through annual attendance by season subscription to plays at all theatres, in addition to an annual membership in the Artistic Director's Circle.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Interested and qualified individuals are encouraged to submit their cover letter and resume in confidence to: BoardDirector@alexanderwhitehead.com. Candidates are expected to submit a resume.



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