
Call for Expressions of Interest

Norfolk & Norwich Festival (NNF) seeks expressions of interest (EOI) from artists, artistic companies, producers and/or other creatives to create a Spiegeltent circus show for 2024.

NNF offers up to £50,000 towards the commission and presentation of a new work to take place in the Adnams Spiegeltent in May 2024.

Deadline for submission of EOIs is 12 noon on Monday 8 May 2023.

The Adnams Spiegeltent circus show

Norfolk & Norwich Festival has a strong track-record of presenting circus as one of our main festival events. In recent years the circus has been the keystone production in the Adnams Spiegeltent. Our focus has been on international circus and companies we have presented have included Cirque Alfonse, Gravity & Other Myths, Circa and Casus.

In 2018 we commissioned and co-produced Shift, a new work by Barely Methodical Troupe. We greatly enjoyed supporting the development and presentation of a new work by a British circus company. This call for expressions of interest, builds on our learning from that commission.

We programme circus because of its potential to amaze, the fun and joy it brings and its broad appeal. We feel the shows that have been most successful are ones with high skill levels; with performers who go the extra mile to engage and entertain audiences; which are thoughtfully conceived and conceptually rigorous; and which are distinctive. Shows with live bands have been particularly welcome.

It is our perception that there is less and less circus being made to tour at this scale and for this context. This may be due to the Global Pandemic, a lack of commissioning investment and/or a perception that it is hard to sustain shows through touring. We want to commission a new show which works for us but will also has the potential for a UK and/or international touring afterlife.

The Adnams Spiegeltent is the Festival's main venue at Festival Gardens (Chapelfield Gardens), the social hub of our festival. The tent works well for us as a site for circus but as also a late-night music venue. Because we are presenting two (sometimes three) shows a day all shows must be flexible and adaptable, with the potential for quick turnaround. However, we have a lot of experience turning shows around and can adapt staging if required. Because of the multiple shows each day, shows are ideally 60/70 minutes without an interval.

The Spiegeltent operates for 12 days (Wed – Sun). The circus usually presents 13 shows and takes rest day(s) on the Monday and/or Tuesday. Proposed dates in 2024 are 15 to 26 May. Adnams have been the sponsor of the Spiegeltent at Norfolk & Norwich Festival since 2009.

The Festival spiegel tent has been Salon Perdu for a number of years and we expect to continue with this tent. Our circus configurations usually accommodate 300+ seats each performance. We usually present circus with a thrust stage into the centre of the space and seating around. We can present the thrust stage in a variety of configurations to allow for use of height in the centre of the tent. This can usually leave us with a playing area of between 2.4-4.8 square metres in the centre. A live band is often tucked in the back of the stage. Details about Salon Perdu – including a download of dimensions – are available online at: <https://www.vanrosmalen.com/spiegel tent/salon-perdu/>.

Time is also allocated for technical rehearsals in the space. This typically amounts to around a day and a half to focus lighting, safety, rigging, etc. This is typically quite tight as time is also required to fit the venue up before opening. Our experienced technical and venue team will work with you to manage your requirements.

Who we want to hear from

Norfolk & Norwich Festival would like to hear from artists, artistic companies, collaborative teams and/or producers who are confident they can conceive, develop and present a circus show for our festival in 2024. We expect the EOI to come from the lead creative who will be able to outline the shape of the team. We are not able to respond to individual artists/acts who would like to be included in a show.

We'll want to learn about the artistic underpinning of your proposal. We're interested in strong and coherent ideas, which will help to give the show shape and direction. In your proposal you may like to address/emphasise:

- A theme or story, which provides a common thread through the production.
- A design-led concept.
- A challenge to the use of the space - this could be thinking creatively about how to subvert the space or perhaps linking the inside with the outside/backstage/secondary venue, etc.
- An alternative audience experience – for instance immersive.
- Integrated community participation.

The conceptual frame of the show will need to be underpinned by high skill levels.

We expect the lead creative to identify the shape and make-up of the delivery team. This will include who will conceive and direct the artistic content; the number and type of performers; and who will take responsibility for producing. We welcome proposals which include creative collaborations, for instance between circus artists and musicians, designers, digital artists, theatre makers, etc.

NNF will be flexible about the producing relationship we have with the lead creative and their team. We favour a creative team which is self-sufficient but we can take the role of a more hands-on producer if required.

We expect to form a relationship with an artist/company to create a new work. However, we are happy to receive proposals to rework existing shows for the context of the Adnams Spiegeltent.

We expect the core of the team to be based in England. This is because we want to support new circus in England but also because we expect the artist/company to seek additional funds through Arts Council England (ACE). We welcome proposals which include international collaboration and performers.

One of the reasons for considering an English-based team is that we're conscious of our environmental impacts and want to reduce our reliance on international air travel.

Commission and presentation partners

We have set out to create a commissioning opportunity, which is achievable at Norfolk & Norwich Festival as a stand-alone event. However, we would be delighted to hear from other presenters who may be interested in co-commissioning or presenting the work in the future.

About the budget

Norfolk & Norwich Festival has a budget of up to £50,000 to commission and present the work. NNF will also provide the spiegel tent with reasonable technical equipment (lights and sound), crew and two technicians (for presentation). The fee is 'all-in' and should cover all rehearsals, design, producing, cast, travel, accommodation, etc. We will pay VAT if the lead organisation is VAT registered. NNF takes all box office income and will be responsible for all marketing and promotion.

We understand that this fee will unlikely be enough to realise the development and presentation of a new production. We therefore expect the lead artist/company to apply for an Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grant. We expect our commission and presentation fee to be used as match income for an ACE application.

About the timeline

EOIs must be submitted by 12 noon on Monday 8 May 2023. NNF will then invite a small number of artists/companies to attend the 2023 Festival to experience the Adnams Spiegeltent and watch Chelsea McGuffin & Co's Le Coup. These artists/companies will then be asked to work up their proposal for submission by the end of June 2023.

Tickets will go on sale in November 2023, which means funding must be in place by this point. An Arts Council England funding application will therefore need to be submitted by August 2023. We acknowledge that this timeline is tight.

11 April 2023	Call for expressions of interest (EOI)
8 May 2023	Deadline for submission of EOI
17 – 28 May 2023	Selected applicants invited to visit NNF 2023 to experience circus as the Adnams Spiegeltent and meet with the NNF team.
June 2023	Submission of developed proposals (invitation only).
June 2023 – May 2024	Conception, development, fundraising and rehearsal undertaken in timescale determined by artists.

November 2023 Project publicly announced and on sale.
15 – 26 May 2024 Presentation

Norfolk & Norwich Festival will only award the commission if we are happy with the artistic and financial outline of the project. If we are not confident taking a project forward, we will instead book an existing show.

How to submit an Expression of Interest

All EOIs should be submitted on the Norfolk & Norwich Festival New Circus Commission form.

About Norfolk & Norwich Festival

Norfolk & Norwich Festival has a long history as a celebration of community identity and aspiration. Founded in 1772 as a fundraising event for the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital it has been at the cultural heart of Norfolk ever since. While the world we live in and artistic practices have changed over time, we hold true to the central commitment of the first events: to celebrate, to share cultural experiences and to bring our community together.

Norfolk & Norwich Festival (NNF) shares exceptional arts experiences across East Anglia. Through our two main activities – the Festival and Festival Connect & Create – we lead and support celebration, creativity and curiosity in our community to make our part of the world a great place to live, learn, work and play.

Norfolk & Norwich Festival takes place in Norwich and around Norfolk each May. The Festival programme is multi-artform, contemporary, international and audience centred. The Festival is distinctive because we collaborate with artists – from down the road and around the world – to explore the unique physical and cultural identities of our place and to make art which is meaningful to the lives of our audiences.

Festival Connect & Create (C&C) supports life-long creative engagement with a focus to improve the cultural offer for children and young people. Our networks connect teachers, artists, and young people. We undertake place-based collaborations which give local communities a creative focus and contribute to social renewal. C&C is a year-round initiative across East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough).

All of our work is underpinned by our ‘programme principles’ – our embrace of:

- art relevant to today, blurring the boundaries between artforms and between art and everyday life.
- ‘festival spirit’ which we bring to our work to celebrate, to share cultural experiences and to bring our community together.
- questions and actions about a changing world, with a focus on: Equality, diversity and inclusion; placemaking; and environmental sustainability.