

Welsh National Opera **General Director and CEO**

Candidate Information Pack



Croeso | Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of General Director & CEO. Welsh National Opera is keen to hear how you will inspire and steer the Company through an exciting next phase.

WNO has, throughout its history, worked on a very broad range of activities to engage many different kinds of people. Working closely with communities and young people in co-creation, co-production and building relations with venues and promoters.

The Company has a strong international reputation garnered over the years through very special relationships with its Directors and Music Directors and the acknowledged strengths of its Chorus and Orchestra. It attracts invitations from across the globe, including the Grand Theatre of Rabat, the World Expo 2020, and the Prague Spring Festival, amongst others. It has had stunning successes in the past year, including *The Makropulos Affair*, *Candide*, *Blaze of Glory!*, *Death in Venice*, attracting critical acclaim and plaudits from the music industry. We are keen for the new leadership to maintain WNO's reputation for new, bold work and to generate excitement within the Company and beyond, attracting partners, donors, and audiences.

The new leadership will need to create a compelling vision for the Company weaving together these multiple artistic and engagement programme strands in the context of mainscale opera seasons of extraordinary quality and variety, to deliver a wide range of artistic, educational, community and health benefits.

This appointment is also an opportunity for the individual or joint leadership to develop an innovative approach to organisational culture and structures, looking at the new and emerging opportunities that technology and the 21st-century working practices offer including innovative collaborations and an awareness of and desire to reduce its carbon footprint.

With public funding from Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England, and with strong support from trusts and foundations, generous donations from individuals and legacies, a healthy endowment fund which all add to the earned income of the Company. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and proposals on the role. Thank you again for your interest in the role of General Director & Chief Executive.

**Yvette Vaughan Jones, Chair,
WNO Board of Directors**



Welsh National Opera Cenedlaethol Cymru

In 1943 a group of people from across South Wales, including miners, teachers, shopworkers and doctors, came together to form a community opera chorus. They wanted to forge an opera company befitting Wales's rich history and reputation as the 'Land of Song'. The energy which drives the Company today is rooted in its formation in the 1940s and reflective of the post-war spirit of democracy and equality.

Today, **Welsh National Opera** exists to bring the power, drama, beauty and raw emotion of opera to as wide an audience as possible, in performances marked by an uncompromising quest for artistic quality and integrity. As a national Company with an international status, we sit at the heart of music-making in Wales and in the communities we serve in Wales and England.

We work with our partners to discover and nurture young talent, and provide a springboard for international careers, working with the National Opera Studio, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama/WNO David Seligman Opera School and supporting an extensive WNO Youth Opera programme and WNO Associate Artists Scheme.

As Europe's largest touring opera company WNO visits some 11 major and 20 smaller venues across Wales and England, plus prestige venues

and festivals abroad. WNO employs 220 people, supports a world-class Orchestra and Chorus, attracts leading artists and creatives, commissions and performs bold new works and co-productions, and presents the highest quality work across its entire artistic programme.

Welsh National Opera's fundamental aim is to entertain and engage audiences at our operas, concerts and events. We provide transformative experiences through our education and outreach programmes, and award-winning projects. Building on 75 years' history, with strong roots in the communities of South Wales, and through our performance and engagement work, WNO is able to broaden and develop new and diverse audiences and demonstrate to future generations that opera is accessible, rewarding, inclusive and relevant – with the power to affect and inspire everyone.



Our Mission and Values

Welsh National Opera exists to bring the power, drama, beauty and pure emotion of opera to as wide an audience as possible in performances marked by an uncompromising quest for artistic quality. As a national company with an international status, we sit at the heart of music-making in Wales and play a valuable role in the communities we serve in Wales and England.

Based in the Welsh capital, Welsh National Opera is located in Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay.

Inclusive

We have a workplace culture where all people are respected and valued

Dynamic

We challenge ourselves creatively and encourage new ideas

Collaborative

We work together as a team to achieve common goals

Generous

We use our talent, knowledge and skills with a generosity of spirit

Responsible

We work and behave with integrity and accountability





Programmes and Engagement

WNO Programmes and Engagement is an intergenerational, year-round, weekly programme that since 2017 has reached just under **445,000** people in England and Wales. We have regular programmes in Plymouth, Southampton, Birmingham and the Black Country and West Wales, Llandudno, Caernarfon, Cardiff, and the South Wales Valleys.

We have a strong focus on developing partnerships with Health, Social Care and Education sectors and work closely with music services, the NHS and other third sector bodies. Our work focuses on creating access to the arts for people who wouldn't normally have the chance to take part or who are excluded from mainstream society. The programme runs across four strands:



Teach

WNO Teach is our schools and special schools programme across Wales and England. We work in 15 schools every week teaching children to sing and perform along with project-based work around our touring repertoire. Working in places of economic disadvantage and limited cultural access, **WNO Teach** includes weekly sessions, schools dress rehearsals and backstage tours. Our Discover Opera collaboration with secondary schools take place in Wales and South West England and is a 12-week programme working with young people ages 11-14 to co-create their own opera inspired by one of our touring productions. We engage with thousands of children through **WNO Teach** every year across hundreds of events, and for many this is their first taste of live opera. Schools in Plymouth, Southampton, Cardiff, Birmingham and Llandudno are invited to attend a live opera concert every year and we regularly welcome over 1000 young people to shows in every venue, along with the chance to attend open dress rehearsals and backstage tours.

Inspire

Inspire offers opportunities for people of all ages to take part in world class opera. This includes our award-winning **WNO Youth Opera** for young people aged 11 – 18 taking place in Cardiff and Llandudno, our side-by-side young musicians programme with WNO Orchestra, and our

'In Short' performances designed to showcase opera in an accessible format for those aged 11-14 taking place in all our tour venues. Also touring to all venues is our family show **Play Opera LIVE**, designed to bring opera to life for early years up to age 10, complete with interactive front of house workshops that show all aspects of opera from wigs and make up to costumes and lighting design. Alongside this we run intergenerational community singing programmes and our groundbreaking relaxed concerts **Opera Tutti**, created for young people with profound and multiple learning needs, that take place in the West Midlands, South West of England and Mid Wales. **Opera Tutti** is a bespoke, sensory performance and the first of its kind in the UK for young people who have not had the chance to experience live opera. It is a fully inclusive, immersive multi-sensory concert, created for children who are engaged in non-subject based learning: pupils who are not ambulant with associated physical difficulties and visual or hearing impairments.

Additionally, we have launched our first **Relaxed Concert** with a mid-scale venue partner in Swansea and Powys. Working with disability specialists, WNO have created an experience for children with disabilities, supporting needs across the neuro-diversity spectrum, sensory and communication impairments, learning disabilities and individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted, with 'chill-out' spaces, braille song sheets and BSL interpreters.



Wellness

Wellness with WNO is our health and well-being programme delivered in partnership with seven NHS health boards and medical professionals across Wales. It includes a singing and breathing programme designed to support people experiencing symptoms of breathlessness and anxiety from the COVID-19 virus.

We also offer a weekly programme for people suffering from persistent pain, an HIV awareness programme for young people in secondary schools in Cardiff, and a series of well-being workshops for secondary school pupils experiencing social anxiety in partnership with Swansea Bay University Health Board Paediatric Physiotherapy team. We are developing new partnerships with Velindre Cancer Centre in Cardiff to deliver a breathlessness management programme for lung-cancer patients, post-radiotherapy treatment and with Palliative Care Wales. As well as this, our team brings music and song to eight hospital wards across Wales every

week and runs **Cradle Choir**, a specialised choir for people with dementia, their families and carers in Milford Haven, Llanelli, and Llandeilo. We also have a performance programme in care homes across the South Wales Valleys.

Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a singing, writing, composition and performance programme for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales and England. It grew out of an initial partnership with the Refugee Council for Wales and Amnesty International during our 2019 Freedom Season – a series of operas around human rights. It has since developed to include professional development and performance opportunities for artists and participants who are seeking sanctuary, working with WNO musicians; we also offer regular events and workshops held in community spaces to celebrate diverse cultures, musical traditions, stories and ideas, and are working towards the second commission of a new opera to showcase this diverse talent.



Cardiff Theatrical Services Limited

Cardiff Theatrical Services Ltd, CTS, is a wholly owned subsidiary of Welsh National Opera. The company has been operating continuously since 1983.

We are a successful scenery builder that actively contributes to the financial health of WNO with an annual turnover of around £2.5m, and the potential to demonstrate growth going forwards.

Our skilled teams at CTS take the client's design, concept and ideas through the entire making process to reality. We are a team of 26 colleagues supported by a range of freelancers and temporary contractors to support our output.

A team of craftspeople, engineers and artists have the skills and experience to realise large- and small-scale projects on time, on budget and to the highest production values, from drawing board to delivery.

We work with significant commercial and subsidised clients in theatre, ballet, opera and creative industries from around the UK and worldwide, including the major UK opera companies, whilst of course also delivering all WNO productions for Cardiff and on tour.



Finances

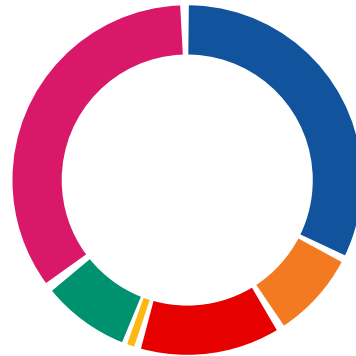
Welsh National Opera's (WNO) turnover in the current year (FY23-24) is forecast at £12.3m, which includes core funding (Arts Council England and Arts Council of Wales) of £8.4m; earned revenue of £1.8m; and contributed income of £1m. The balance is made up of a contribution from the HMRC Theatre and Orchestra tax credit scheme of £1.1m.

WNO wholly owned subsidiary company Cardiff Theatrical Services Ltd (CTS) has an anticipated turnover of £2.4m for the current year (FY23-24).

The Company faces significant financial challenges resulting from reductions in public funding, increasing costs and box office uncertainty due to current inflationary and economic pressures, and is reviewing its existing financial and operating model.

WNO is proud to be funded by both Arts Councils of Wales and England and has secured £23.7m to cover the three-year period 2024-2027. The Company has recently received a cut in public funding of £2.2m from Arts Council England (April 2023) and £0.5m from Arts Council Wales (April 2024). This equates to a 25% reduction in funding. In response, the Company is currently delivering a transformation programme that will result in a vibrant and financially sustainable Company for the future by 2025-2026. To support the transformation programme, the Company secured £3.25m of Arts Council England Transformation Stage 2 funding to develop and deliver a new operational model by August 2025.

Income 2023-24



ACE – Funding	£4m
Direct Activity Income	£1.7m
Other Income Sources TTR	£1.1m
Contribution Income	£1m
Investment Income	£0.1m
ACW – Funding	£4.4m

Expenditure 2023-24



Staffing	£8m
Freelance Cast and Performers	£2m
Touring Costs	£2m
Overheads	£1.9m
Travel and Subsistence	£1.7m
Production Costs	£0.8m
Programme and Engagement	£0.4m

The Company is forecasting, for the current year ending on 31 August 2024, an operational deficit of £4.5m before recognising £2.4m of Arts Council England Transformation Stage 2 funding ear-marked to support the transformation programme and releasing £1.2m of unrestricted designated funds. It should be noted that £2.2m of the expected £4.5m deficit is a consequence of the ACE NPO funding cut.

The financial reserves are anticipated to be £9.9m by the year end:

Financial Reserves	£0,000
Restricted funds/endowments	£4,152
Unrestricted designated funds	£1,050
Unrestricted general funds	£2,803
Total funds	£8,005
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Free reserves	£1,955
Total Financial Reserves	£9,960

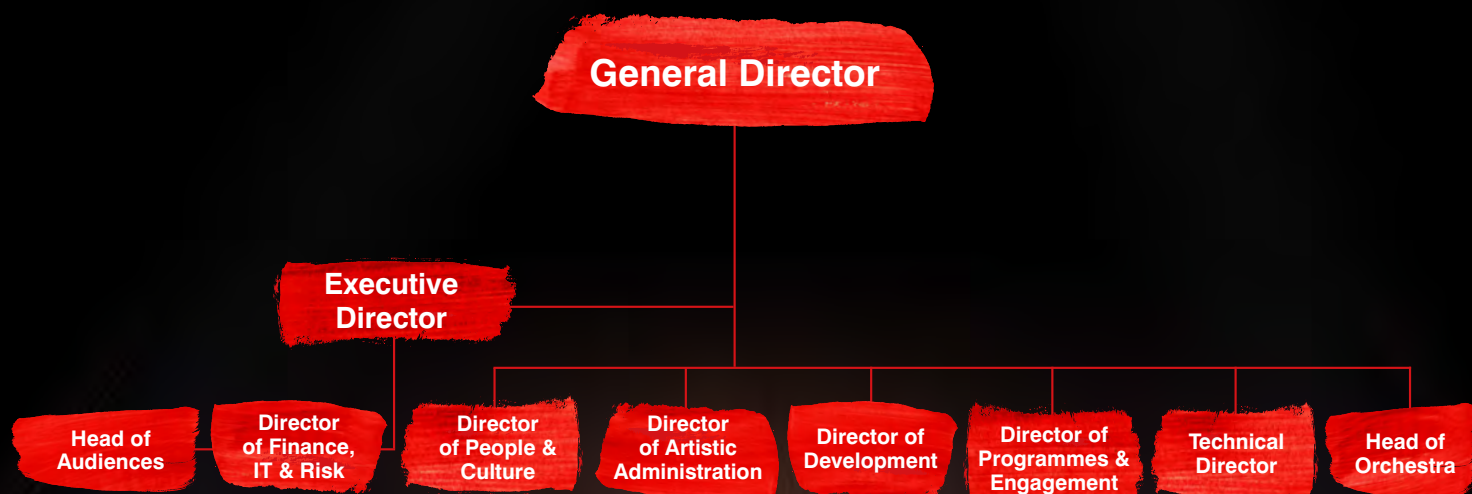
It is pleasing that opera box office income can be seen to be building during 2023-2024, recent successes in Wales Millenium Centre have seen average attendance grow to 72%. The attendance at some of the touring venues is slower to recover, with average attendance of 64%, strategic partnerships are being explored to identify opportunities to improve reach and diversification of audiences in the areas. Fundraising income has been harder to improve with income levels remaining stable on previous years.

Expenditure across all areas of the Company is continuing to be reviewed to ensure effective management of budgets and any efficiency savings are realised.

The Annual Financial statements including Trustees' Report for 2022-2023 can be found on the WNO website.



WNO Senior Team



Role outline

At a time of fundamental change in the UK's arts funding landscape, impacting the opera sector in particular, Welsh National Opera now seeks dynamic, experienced leadership possessing artistic vision, sound business acumen and the drive to build a high-performing and resilient future for the Company. Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the General Director & CEO will have full responsibility for the design and delivery of the Company's vision and mission, both artistically and operationally. Working within the parameters of our external funder requirements, the General Director & CEO will have the freedom to organise, optimise and manage our resources, in order to deliver our ambition and secure our future. The role will draw on the leader's gravitas and lived experience of delivering successful transformational change within an opera company, or a comparable arts or cultural industries context.



Key responsibilities

Leadership

Develop and articulate an inspiring, holistic, and financially secure future vision for WNO that encompasses world-class mainscale opera productions, adventurous community and learning work, transformative digital activity, and broad-ranging partnerships, within and beyond Wales.

Provide clear direction, motivation and purpose to all staff, and Company members so that the whole organisation is aligned with and committed to WNO's mission and strategic priorities.

Foster and embed a collaborative working culture across the organisation, encouraging ambition, innovation, creativity and environmental stewardship within and across teams, so that the extraordinary potential of the Company can be fully realised.

Develop trust and confidence through regular, transparent and inclusive communications, so that internal and external stakeholders are empowered and enlisted.

Set aspirational equality, diversity and inclusion goals for all dimensions of WNO's work, including the broader artistic programme, the makeup of the workforce and company membership, its partnerships and the demographic profile of audiences and participants.

Advocate for opera and for WNO as a world-class exponent of this thrilling art form.

Artistic

Working closely with the Music Director and members of the artistic team, be responsible for the design and delivery of an exciting and diverse programme of operas, concerts and other events.

Extend reach and engagement by ensuring that WNO's artistic output resonates with a diverse range of audiences and the broadest possible public.

Nurture relationships with other arts and opera companies in the UK and worldwide, with a view to developing creative collaborations and co-producing and co-commissioning partnerships, ensuring that WNO's financial contribution is invested wisely and beneficially.

Ensure that WNO's mainscale productions maintain the Company's world-class reputation and are excellent in all respects: musically, theatrically, and technically.

Ensure that all WNO's artistic activities, at all scales and in all formations, are excellent in their own terms and achieve their objectives.

Strategic and operational

Work closely with the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director and other members of the Senior Leadership Team in developing and implementing strategic business plans that deliver against the Company's short- and long-term artistic and financial objectives.

Ensure effective budgeting, cost control and financial management across all the Company's activities.

Drive and oversee an ambitious, comprehensive income generation strategy, encompassing public sector funders, trusts and foundations, donors, sponsors, and partners, as well as revenues from commercial income streams and opportunities, maximising the financial return from all areas of WNO's business.

Protect, nurture and develop WNO's youth and community work to fulfil our social inclusion ambitions and plans.

Encourage the exploration and incorporation of carbon reduction-focused and other beneficial new technologies across WNO's departments and activities.

Key external relationships

Be the visible face of the Company, developing and nurturing key external relationships at local, national, and international levels.

Build excellent relations with the Company's key partners and stakeholders, including venues, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council England, cultural and business partners, Welsh Government, sponsors and donors.

Promote Welsh National Opera as a national company and a key influencer and cultural ambassador for Wales.

Governance

Maintain a positive and engaged working relationship with WNO's Chair and Board, attending Board meetings and Committee meetings as required, updating, and informing the Board appropriately, enabling Trustees to contribute and make effective decisions. With the Chair, ensure that the organisation is compliant with relevant legislation and that governance processes and protocols are robust, conform to best practice, and subject to regular review.



Person specification

Skills and attributes

- A passion for opera, and a commitment to advocate for opera as an art form, to grow its supporter base and that of WNO as a world-class opera company.
- Ability to envision an exciting, sustainable future for WNO that connects every aspect of its programme, inspires stakeholder buy-in, and motivates the team to excel.
- Ability to maintain oversight and control of a complex operation across short-, medium, and long-term planning horizons.
- Collaborative, inclusive and engaging in how the Senior Leadership Team, and the wider WNO workforce, is led and managed.
- Articulate with excellent interpersonal and communication skills; straight talking, but sensitive to others' needs.
- Sound business acumen and confident judgement.
- Entrepreneurial with the drive to identify and respond to new opportunities that will further the aims of Welsh National Opera.
- Ability to negotiate, persuade and influence broad-ranging constituencies at all levels.
- A personal commitment to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and to embedding them across the organisation and its activities.
- Alignment with and personal commitment to WNO's values, including a passion for driving environmental sustainability.
- Ability to speak Welsh, or familiarity with/willingness to learn the Welsh language (desirable).

Knowledge and experience

- Substantial experience in a senior leadership role in the arts, cultural sector, or creative industries.
- Track record of leading and developing high-performing individuals and teams in an organisation of comparable scale and complexity.
- Proven experience of leading transformational change in a dynamic workplace environment.
- Good understanding of opera, opera repertory, and the UK's opera sector.
- Appreciation of current trends and developments in opera production and presentation, including adaptations to established ways of working to minimise the environmental impacts of creating and touring opera productions.
- Significant experience of managing sizeable budgets in the context of a large-scale enterprise, generating significant levels of income from diverse sources.
- Proven experience of balancing artistic ambition with commercial reality.
- Successful track record of establishing and maintaining positive and productive relationships with major funders, donors, and stakeholders.
- Experience of delivering positive impact in socially diverse communities.
- Track record of working successfully with unionised workforce (desirable).
- Professional senior-level experience in an opera company (desirable).

Terms and conditions

Contract type	Permanent, full-time
Salary	Commensurate with a position of this importance
Probation period	Six months with one month's notice period
Notice period	Six months for both parties
Holiday entitlement	25 days plus bank holidays (usually eight)
Location	Cardiff. The General Director & CEO is expected to live within commutable distance.
Other benefits	<p>Company Pension – All employees are automatically enrolled into WNO's Stakeholder Pension Scheme (4% employee and 4% Company contributions) after three months, subject to satisfying certain eligibility criteria</p> <p>Corporate Leisure – Gym Membership operated by Cardiff City Council</p> <p>Employee Assistance Programme</p> <p>BHSF Healthcare Cash Plan</p> <p>Salary Extras discount platform</p> <p>Free Welsh language Lessons</p> <p>Discounted Parking with Q Park</p>

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

At Welsh National Opera we celebrate difference. We see difference as an advantage and a benefit for our colleagues, our audiences and our communities where we work and perform.

We believe that diverse teams have a positive impact on our work and our productions and help us better serve our audiences, so we are building a culture where difference is valued.

Our Company thrives on different perspectives and unique ways of thinking and we believe our greatest strength is our people. We recruit based on capability and performance and are committed to showing respect for all. Welsh National Opera is proud to be an equal opportunities employer and are committed to equal opportunities regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, gender identity or origin.



How to apply



To apply, please send a CV and a covering letter stating why you think you are suitable for the role to our recruitment consultant, Helen Sprott, at **hsprott@aeminternational.co.uk**

Letters should be no more than three pages. All applications will be acknowledged. Applications can be submitted in English or Welsh language.

If you do not wish to submit a written application but would like to apply using alternative means, for example, by submitting a video application, then please contact our consultant, Helen Sprott, AEM International Ltd at **hsprott@aeminternational.co.uk**

As a publicly funded arts organisation based in Wales, we are required to collect data about applicants for our roles. This data is confidential and is not used or seen by anyone involved in the assessment of applications.

Please ensure that you complete and submit the Equalities Monitoring Questionnaire and the Welsh Language Skills Questionnaire. These should be submitted with your application and are available to download at **aeminternational.co.uk/current-opportunities**, under **General Director & CEO, Welsh National Opera**.

WNO welcomes applications from the broadest range of candidates, especially from underrepresented groups, those who wish to propose flexible working arrangements, and candidates applying on a partnership/job-share basis.

If you would like an informal, confidential conversation about the role, please contact Helen at **hsprott@aeminternational.co.uk** or **01728 808262**.

Application timetable

Closing date for applications **Friday 26 April at 5pm**

Preliminary interviews with AEM International **Weeks commencing 13 and 20 May online**

First round interviews **Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 June in Cardiff**

Second round interviews **Friday 14 June in Cardiff**

