

Freelancer Welcome Pack

Dear Freelancer,

We're extremely pleased to welcome you to Akademi and the team working on Plastic Drastic Fantastic. We very much look forward to working with you.

You will have received a contract specific to your role with us complete with associated terms and conditions. We hope that it is clear and comprehensive. If you have any questions regarding your contract, however small, please do contact us and we'll be happy to discuss them with you. This additional pack is provided as information about how Akademi engages with freelancers, the best practice guidance we follow, freelancer terms and conditions, important company policies and a general mutual agreement around how we work together. This is an ever-evolving document, which is offered as a conversation; we also wish for it to be clear and useful, and welcome any queries or suggestions for additions that might enhance our practice and continue to enhance our relationship with our freelance workforce.

This document has been drafted with careful consideration to employment law, ACAS standards, equity, diversity and inclusion policies and fair pay and practices. Across 2020 we were heavily involved in an initiative called CF:SLR (Creative Freelancers: Shaping London's Recovery) which brought together 50 freelancers to partner with cultural organisations to discuss fair practices in the industry and how to improve conditions for freelancers. The findings and recommendations from the CF:SLR (and subgroups, Freelance Task Force, FTF; and Dance FTF) were hugely influential in the creation of this welcome pack and policies. Akademi also has an independent Artist Advisory Group (made up of 5 freelance dance artists) who have reviewed and authorised the content in this document.

This pack is sent to all freelancers Akademi engages with and as there is important information within (such as safeguarding policies) please sign to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the details of this pack or contact us if anything is not clear.

We have tried to make this document accessible in terms of font and colours, but if you have any further accessibility requirements, please contact us and we shall try to provide alternatives.

We hope that this information is useful and interesting. If you have any comments, please don't hesitate to contact Kirsten Burrows, Akademi's Executive Director on kirsten@akademi.co.uk

Yours sincerely,
Team Akademi

January 2023

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About Us

Our Vision & Mission

Akademi's vision is that professional South Asian dance is thriving at the centre of British cultural life. We want everyone, no matter what their age or background to have the opportunity to experience, learn about or participate in South Asian dance, and in doing so gain an understanding of different communities and cultures. Akademi is a catalyst for change, a proactive and collaborative partner, creating outstanding artistic experiences that are driven by societal and scientific issues that are relevant and resonant now.

Akademi's mission is to develop artists, inspire audiences and enhance lives by creating and nurturing excellence in classical, contemporary, popular and participatory South Asian dance in the UK.

Akademi's Manifesto (created 2021)

- Our creative programme will be driven by societal and scientific issues that are relevant and resonant to the now.
- The dance artists we work with are our collaborators and co-curators and we will actively engage with them to nurture the future generations of dance leaders.
- Our learning and participation programme will be underpinned by research to ensure dance impacts the physical and mental wellbeing of our communities.
- We will actively seek opportunities for people of all cultures, abilities, and ages to access South Asian dance.
- Every new work will seek to factor in inclusivity and access.
- We will endeavour to listen to our communities to plan and devise all new learning and participation programmes effectively in collaboration with our artists and participants.
- Our work will engage with dance artists and communities through partnerships with organisations across the country.
- We are committed to this manifesto. We will endeavour to listen, be responsive and evolve with our changing times.

Staff Team



Subathra
Subramaniam
Artistic Director &
Joint CEO

Works
Monday to Friday

✉ suba@akademi.co.uk



Kirsten Burrows
Executive Director &
Joint CEO

Works
Monday to Friday

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Antareepa Thakur
Marketing Manager

Works
Monday to Thursday

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Belinda Sculley
Creative Learning
Producer

Works
Monday to Friday

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Keisha Bhamra
Finance Manager

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Part-time

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Sankriti
Santhanakrishnan
Administrative Manager

Works
Monday to Friday

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For full staff bios, refer to our [website](#).

Board

- Ann David
 - Anu Kapoor
 - Caroline Casey
 - Emily Jenkins
 - Hannah Dye
 - Keith Khan [Chair]
 - Prakash Kurup [Treasurer]
 - Rachel Harris
 - Sarah Robson
 - Shravan Sood
-

Our Programmes

Akademi works tirelessly to bring exemplar South Asian dance to varied community settings and public spaces. Our current programmes include the following main projects:



Dance Well

A well-established programme of movement workshops helping disadvantaged & socially isolated older people with long term poor health and to encourage movement, mobility, and well-being. Dance Well is delivered in community centres, older people's settings and hospitals (wards and atrium areas). Currently 4-6 specialist freelancers are employed across Dance Well.

Funded by City Bridge Trust and Linbury Trust.

Reach Out and Reveal (ROAR)

A dedicated, specialist programme that utilises the unique movement vocabulary of South Asian dance to support a wider range of physical and non-verbal communication techniques to meet the needs of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. ROAR runs term-time weekly sessions at three Special Educational Needs schools. Currently employing 2 specialist freelancers alongside 3 trainee freelancers in special needs provision; plus two freelance dance artists in SEND settings researchers. *Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation & BBC Children In Need.*





Feet First

A newly developed project to begin in 2023 to provide training for South Asian dance artists in working with young people with mental health issues. The project will deliver co-created participatory arts opportunities for young people to support their mental health and well-being as they prepare to transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services.

Funded by Barings Foundation and Linbury Trust.

Plastic Drastic Fantastic

A production for children created in 2022 (original in co-production with Polka Theatre). The show explores our relationship with plastic – covering its harmful impact on the environment yet exploring what makes plastic so versatile, useful and ubiquitous.

Choreography by Suba Subramaniam, touring autumn 2023 with a freelance cast of 3 dancers plus rehearsal director and crew. *Funded by Arts Council England.*



Pravaas

A new outdoor production that explores climate migration through South Asian dance forms and Carnatic vocals. Touring as part of the Without Walls consortium 2023. Choreography by Vidya Patel, with a freelance cast of 3 dancers and 1 vocalist plus rehearsal director and crew.

Plus, many additional community projects, school projects and performances and private or commissioned bespoke events.

Akademi offers professional development opportunities for artists throughout our programmes. Please see below for more information.

Freelancer Statement

Akademi recognises the value and importance of the freelance workforce within the cultural industries. We know that the creative industries rely heavily on this workforce and would be at a loss without it. The freelance workforce contains an enormous resource of creative talent, skills, and experience. We also acknowledge the precarious nature of employment for freelancers and, whilst freelancing can offer an interesting, rewarding, varied and flexible career, it is also full of financial and career uncertainty and challenges around future sustainability. We recognise that for many artists, creatives and technical crew, freelancing is a necessity, not a choice, as there are few substantial, salaried jobs in artistic roles and that freelancers do not benefit from the same terms as salaried staff.

Akademi engages between 25 – 50 freelancers per year, depending on the projects and performance cycle. We are committed to treating freelancers with respect and fairness, ensuring fair pay and conditions and best practice across the entire freelancer engagement, from recruitment right through to project wrap up and evaluation. Akademi endeavours to be a transparent organisation with clear communication and channels for dialogue. We believe in building strong, close links with our freelancers, based on professionalism, trust, and care for the individual. Akademi will continue to abide by best practice and seek opportunities to refine and improve, all of which will be monitored by our Board of Trustees. We will also actively advocate for freelancer engagement best practice in the South Asian dance sector, with our funders and within the wider cultural industry.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Statement

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) is embedded within and essential to Akademi's vision and programme: our aim is to reflect, celebrate and explore the complex hybridity of cultural identities in contemporary England, promoting South Asian dance as a British artform; a unique, plural vision ensuring relevance in an evolving political, social and artistic context. As a Global Majority and female-led company rooted in the UK's multicultural communities, Akademi actively champions and aims to promote sector best practice in EDI action as illustrated in our business plan and its accompanying performance indicators which are monitored at board level and reported to Arts Council England as part of the framework of Investment Principles monitoring.

Akademi abides by the Equalities Act 2010 and is committed to ensuring that its activities, governance and management practices do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any individual on grounds of the protected characteristics set out in the Act:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Akademi also recognises class / socio economic background as a protected characteristic.

Recruitment Practices

Akademi aims to operate a transparent, structured open call process for freelance roles. It is acknowledged however that there are cases whereby it is not practical or appropriate to publicly advertise for all roles – instances include when the role is a one-off performance or workshop (and needs to be carefully curated towards a particular specialism), when there is not sufficient time to fulfil a recruitment drive. In these cases, it is the practical and sensible route to draw from Akademi's known pool of artists (artistic associates), to fulfil the short-term role.

Akademi offers routes for new artists (or those wishing to expand their experience) into artistic associates. We are constantly on the look out for new performers of a myriad of South Asian dance forms and actively encourage and fund training routes into our Learning and Participation roles (such as the current paid trainee programme in Reach Out and Reveal and the paid opportunities to support and shadow our community centre and hospital work).

In instances where a new project or role is developed, particularly for longer-term contracts (defined as over 4 weeks equivalent) Akademi aims to conduct a wide-reaching, public open call for recruitment with a rigorous and structured process for EDI and best practice.

The advert for any role must be written in accordance with Equal Opportunities policy and Equality's Act (October 2010). Full information about the role (whether staff or freelance) will be available on Akademi's website including clear timeframe and remuneration information. Where possible, the information will be provided via video with captioning and BSL and Akademi ensures our Equal Opportunities statement is included.

Akademi will ensure that any reasonable adjustments necessary for disabled applicants must be made prior to interview and/or recruitment.

Shortlisted applicants will receive notification of the interview process, information about the questions and time to prepare. The interview process will be conducted in a professional, yet friendly and non-intimidating way. Each candidate will be welcomed, thanked for their interest, and provided with identical introductory information and timeframe. Candidates will have sufficient time to ask their own questions. The successful candidate will be offered appropriate time to consider the role and not pushed into accepting there and then. Unsuccessful interviewed candidates will be telephoned and offered feedback as to the decision-making process.

Payment and Terms

Akademi is a London Living Wage Certified provider, and we always aim to provide better than equity freelance rates. Equity rate holiday pay is provided for performers and stage managers on weekly rates above 4 weeks. Freelancers who are required to attend meetings or training sessions beyond the scope of their normal paid contracts and working hours are remunerated at appropriate rates alongside out of pocket travel expenses (where mutually discussed in advance, bearing in mind that Akademi encourages public transport on environmental grounds).

Akademi will pay freelancer contracts within 30 days and normally within 7-14 days (except in exceptional circumstances beyond our control). Learning and participation work is paid on an extremely competitive day rate that includes provision for travel costs and time.

Fixed rate freelance contracts are calculated as per the appropriate rate for the contract role and length and in line with industry standards. Payment schedules can be discussed as per the freelancers' requirements (for example a mutually agreed amount paid up front). Akademi acknowledges that freelancers may work beyond the scope of appropriate contracted hours, particularly when on a fixed rate. Akademi will always be mindful to act in fairness and to ensure that any additional work requested of the freelancer is acknowledged and remunerated appropriately and to acknowledge that changes in the project or contract (such as delays) may have a negative knock-on effect to the livelihood of the freelancer.

Contracts and Induction

Freelance contracts are all created bespoke to the role and include specifics around role description, schedule, payment terms and other appropriate financial information, and other details particular to the scope of the contract. Akademi is committed to the contract content being clear and in plain, accessible language.

Contracts are issued ahead of the start date of the role and with sufficient time for the freelancer to check the details and request clarifications and ask questions as necessary.

Contracts will also include standard freelancer employment Terms and Conditions. These have been drafted in accordance with HMRC guidance on the engagement of freelancers.

The freelancer will be welcomed to Akademi with an appropriate induction session depending on their role. Induction will cover welcome and key information about the contract / project, safeguarding and risk assessment briefings, introductions to staff and colleagues and time to answer any questions that may have arisen during the process of onboarding.

We welcome continued dialogue and information sharing throughout the duration of your contract. We endeavour to ensure you have all the information pertaining to your role that is necessary and that expectations are mutually agreed. We wish to be appropriately involved in your role (and will need to monitor the project for quality and funders requirements) whilst offering you the autonomy as an experienced and skilled artist to interpret and provide your own unique creativity.

Professional Development & Training

Akademi is committed to developing opportunities and skills for artists working within the South Asian dance sector and particularly those who are engaging with learning and participation projects. We create and provide structured, fully funded, professional development programmes such as the trainee strand on Reach Out and Reveal (2022 – 2025) and opportunities for artists to gain experience by shadowing established artists on our Dance Well programme. Safeguarding training is provided by Akademi and mandatory for artists working with vulnerable people (normally offered online).

Associate freelancers who feel that they could avail from any formal or informal training to help with their role should discuss options with the team and we will always try to accommodate, budgets allowing.

Safeguarding

Akademi holds safeguarding policies for staff and freelancers who are engaged on our projects working with children and vulnerable adults (see appendices below). These policy documents are provided to freelancers working with these groups at time of issuing contracts and must be carefully considered and signed to confirm that the information provided is understood and will be adhered to. Akademi has two Designated Safeguarding Officers: Belinda Sculley, Creative Learning Producer and Suba Subramaniam, Artistic Director. Both Belinda and Suba have significant experience of safeguarding practices and protocols and have up to date safeguarding training.

Safeguarding procedures are discussed at induction and, for those freelancers working with vulnerable groups, safeguarding training is mandatory and paid for by Akademi. Enhanced or specialist safeguarding training is also offered if required.

Akademi may require freelancers to acquire enhanced DBS disclosures for certain projects. These will be paid for by Akademi but must be applied for in good time if required.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

“Mental Health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” World Health Organisation

Akademi respects the rights of all of our freelancers, staff and participants and we acknowledge that everyone involved in the organisation has mental health and well-being needs. We also acknowledge that freelance work in general is associated with poor mental health and especially so after the disruption and uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

As part of our commitment to ensuring we take mental health and wellbeing into consideration across all aspects of our work and for all of our stakeholders we're working towards making sure that:

- We support our staff and freelancers to hold some level of mental health and wellbeing awareness training.
- Via our safeguarding for vulnerable people, we ensure that all freelancers know how to raise concerns to protect participants they may encounter who are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- We work to reduce stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace and build a culture that prevents discrimination including bullying and harassment.

Akademi offers staff and freelancers paid leave to help with mental health issues. The organisation is also committed to assisting with the cost of appropriate therapy, if appropriate and if required. We are currently compiling a list of resources and support mechanisms for our freelancers to access if required and are investigating the viability of purchasing access to a counselling service for staff and freelancers to utilise.

Health & Safety

Akademi is committed to high standards of Health and Safety in order to create a safe working environment for all in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and its amendments.

It is our policy to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions, equipment, working practices and adequate facilities for all our employees, freelance staff, learners, young people and those with special needs or a disability and to furnish such information, training and supervision as required for this purpose. Akademi also accepts responsibility, as far as is reasonably practicable, for the health and safety of visitors to the offices. *For more information, refer to our Health & Safety policy.*

Sustainability

Akademi recognises the imperative for arts organisations to do their part to develop environmentally sustainable operations, acknowledging the UK government's updated aims to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, compared with the previous target of at least 80% reduction from 1990 levels (source: www.gov.uk).

We also recognise that environmental sustainability is important from a business perspective as well as an ethical one and we are committed to minimising the impact of Akademi's programme and business practices on the environment. Our environmental responsibility is emphasized through our creative production themes which are aimed at raising awareness amongst children and young people on issues such as the impact of harmful materials on the environment and climate change. We are committed to using sustainable production practices such as the re-use of props and costumes and take active steps to ensure that these practices are written into contracts with artists and partner settings.

Akademi aims to use policies and procedures that will ensure the conservation of natural resources while minimising any adverse environmental impact from our operations, including, but not limited to, waste reduction and recycling.

We aim to review our environmental policies and procedures regularly to improve our performance and quality whilst also seeking to comply with current environmental legislation.

All employees are made aware of this policy and their responsibilities for environmental issues. The Executive Director has responsibility for monitoring procedures and reviewing this policy on an annual basis with the support of the Company Administrator. The Executive Director will inform the Board of any issues which arise, and the Board monitors our environmental action plan on a quarterly basis. *Refer to our Sustainability policy for more.*