

**FOUNDATION DEGREE CIRCUS ARTS  
BA (HONS) DEGREE CIRCUS ARTS  
PROSPECTUS 2023 - 2024**

**national centre  
for circus arts**





## WELCOME

I am delighted to welcome you to the National Centre for Circus Arts. We need performing and creative artists in our world now more than ever. It is a great time to be taking that step into a professional career as a circus artist by training with us on our higher education programme. You will have taken amazing and various journeys to bring you to this point of making a choice about your further training. Now you need to consider what will help you to develop your technical circus skills, your own creative voice, the place you want to take in our world, and how your creativity will tell those stories and create those experiences that change our society. The National Centre can support you to develop in those disciplines and give you the fire, tools and fuel for a lifetime of discovery and achievement as a creative artist.

It is also a really exciting place to spend your time – London remains the centre for so much creative and artistic endeavour, and from our base in Hoxton you can be well and truly immersed in all that the capital's abundant cultural scene has to offer.

Our staff are passionate circus specialists with years of professional experience who are committed to making sure each student has the best possible training equipping them for their future career. We are dedicated to ensuring students leave the National Centre ready to take their next steps as creative, independent, dynamic professional artists. We look forward to meeting you at auditions.

**Kate White**  
CEO and Principal

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTRE

The National Centre for Circus Arts is a registered charity and one of Europe's leading providers of circus education. Based in a magnificent Victorian power station adjacent to Hoxton Square, we involve thousands of people in the creation and performance of circus arts every year.

Our diverse range of work includes professional development opportunities for aspiring and established performers, recreational classes for adults, and progressive training for under-18s in the London Youth Circus. Our higher education programme comprises a Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Degree in Circus Arts. We enrol around 30 new students each year, and our graduates have gone on to join companies such as Giffords, Cirque du Soleil, Ockham's Razor, Cirque Eloize, and Seven Fingers, or set up their own circus production companies such as Barely Methodical Troupe, Brainfools and Alula. This year, we celebrate 30 years of fostering the development of circus professionals across the UK.

### Our Higher Education Mission is to...

- Be a centre of artistic excellence
- Be experimental and innovative
- Nurture bravery and boldness
- Embrace the idea of trial and error as part of the process of discovery
- Develop creative openness in our students and teachers
- Be a research facility
- Actively and strategically search out the next generation of artists and collaborators
- Be a liminal space
- Create excitement within the organisation and outside
- Value circus artistry by driving:
  1. Curiosity
  2. Cultural engagement
  3. Challenge to industry perceptions
  4. Collaborative practice

**“My favourite thing so far is being able to go in everyday and do what we love whilst learning so much from not only the amazing teachers, but other students around us too”**

**- Ebony Gumbs - FD2 Student (Pictured)**





**“The degree has built my confidence and has given me the tools and space to realise which direction I want to go in”**

**-Benderson West - BA student**

## FACILITIES

Retaining the features and character of an imposing industrial space, our building began life as an electricity generating station in 1896.

The site was rescued from dereliction in 1994 and, following extensive restoration and reconstruction, the building gained a new lease of life as a unique facility in the UK for circus arts.

**“It is a beautiful building to study in and the facilities support our learning across a range of disciplines.”**

**-Talisman Gabriel - Graduate**



### Our facilities include:

**Combustion Chamber** – our largest space at an impressive 425 sq m

**Generating Chamber** – our second largest space at 280 sq m

**Creation Studio** – a purpose-built rehearsal studio for circus, theatre and dance

**The Courtyard** – a large outdoor space

**The Library** – providing specialist circus resources

**The Body Shop** – a room used for physical preparation rehab and prehab, equipped with gym equipment

**Take a Digital Tour of the building!**

## FOUNDATION DEGREE

**Duration: 2 years (full-time) September-July**

### Entry requirements

- Applicants must be 18 or over on entry.
- Applicants will be able to demonstrate their intent to pursue professional employment in circus arts.
- Applicants will be required to demonstrate a proficiency in both written and verbal English language. For the Foundation Degree in Circus Arts this would normally be GCSE English or equivalent International English Language Testing System. Overseas students may be required to take a Secure English Language Test (SELT) prior to entry in order to meet VISA requirements.
- Applicants must fulfil parts 1 and 2 of the admissions process. If the applicant is from outside the UK or they are unable to attend an audition day they may request to submit a full video audition (instead of attending part 2), however, we recommend attending the live audition.

### What you will learn

Challenge perceptions of what circus is and explore multiple ways of approaching creative work. As well as building on what you know, you will develop a curiosity to bring to all areas of your practice. The Foundation Degree in Circus Arts aims to develop a broad range of skills required as a professional circus artist. Training is intensive in order to sustain physical progression. There is a strong focus on artistic creativity and collaboration, as well as the development of reflective and analytical skills. Students will go through a specialisation process to enable them to find one circus discipline best suited to them. Alongside circus discipline training, students will study other areas such as:

- Movement and composition
- Theatre
- Acrobatics
- Theories of performance and practice
- Devising
- Ensemble work
- Circus producing and production management

All degree students undertake a series of extracurricular theory and practical sessions aimed at providing them with a good understanding of the fundamentals of circus rigging and safe practices. These sessions contribute to them graduating as rounded circus practitioners.

The Technical department work closely with students to find creative rigging solutions and offer support during the creation of their performance pieces. Degree productions are professionally produced and supported to a high standard.

## SPECIALISATION PROCESS

Specialisation happens during Term 1 of the Foundation Degree. It is a collaborative process between the student and staff, leading to a decision about which circus discipline is suited both physically and creatively to that person. Students are only taught in one discipline, however, they can explore other disciplines as part of their own independent learning.

### The National Centre offers these disciplines

#### Juggling and Manipulation

Ball, club and ring juggling  
Hula hoop  
Hats, cigar boxes, ball spinning and 'gentleman

#### Acrobatics

Hand to hand  
Chinese pole  
Acro dance  
Hand balancing  
Banquine

#### Big Space \*

Cyr wheel  
Teeterboard  
Trick bike  
Tightwire  
Slack rope

#### Aerial

Single point trapeze  
Static trapeze  
Doubles trapeze  
Hoop  
Rope  
Silks  
Straps  
Multi cord  
(basic level of rope and silks required)  
Net/loop  
(basic level of rope and silks required)  
Aerial pole (basic level of Chinese pole required)

\* Big Space discipline options will be by specific invitation only based on:

- Availability of teachers
- Space restrictions
- Ability



## BA (HONS) DEGREE

**Duration:** 1 year (full-time) September-July

**Entry Requirements:** Applicants should hold a Foundation Degree from the National Centre for Circus Arts or another school listed as a recognised full member of FEDEC. A full list can be found [here](#)

### What you will learn

This one-year course consolidates the technical level of a specific circus discipline and its integration with a personal artistic approach. As well as physical skill development, there is a strong focus on artistic exploration and creativity, contextual studies and planning for the future. A higher level of autonomy, research and independent practice is expected.

Alongside further circus discipline training, students will study:

- Circus in the 21st century
- Business planning
- Negotiated performance task
- Directing
- Movement and composition
- The ensemble

The year usually culminates in a public performance of students' own devised pieces, giving them the platform to showcase themselves as graduating circus artists.

**“The ensemble production process was magical. Making something with all my friends and colleagues was a life changing experience.”**

**- Adam Havsky - student**



## ADMISSIONS PROCESS

### Part 1: Apply and submit video

- Fill out our online degree application form. Applications open on our website in October and close the following March each year. Deadlines will be confirmed on our website.
- Submit your video link within the application. [See part 1 video guidance and criteria here](#)
- Once we have received your application form and video, we will invite you to part 2 (a one-day audition) as long as you meet the entry requirements.

### Part 2: Attend an in-person audition

- Part 2 auditions are held in London around March/April time each year. Specific dates will be confirmed on our website [here](#)
- Over the course of the day, candidates will follow working sessions similar to classes held on the course. The day will include (order and times may vary):

**Meet and greet**

**Movement**

**Theatre**

**Presentations**

**Selected candidates will be asked to stay for an individual discussion and group Q&A session**

### Video auditions

Applicants that are based outside of the UK or are unable to attend one of our scheduled part 2 audition dates can apply to audition fully by video. Video audition requests will be based on individual circumstance. Our full video audition requirements and criteria can be found [here](#)

### What do we look for in auditions?

The audition panel are looking for your suitability to study on our degree course and potential for a career in circus arts. Having experience in circus skills is desirable but not essential and does not exclude you from getting on the course. The main areas the panel will be looking at are your:

- Technical potential
- Creative potential
- Willingness to collaborate and an open approach to learning

Panel scores and comments from both parts of the audition will be used to select candidates for individual discussions.

For further details about the admissions process and to read our audition criteria please [visit our website](#)

## FEES AND FUNDING

### Students classed as 'Home Fee' status

Fees for new entrants classed as 'Home Fee' status in 2023/24 are £9250\* on entry.

### Students classed as 'Overseas Fee' (sometimes referred to as 'International') status

Fees for new entrants classed as 'Overseas Fee' status in 2023/24 are £17,935\* on entry. You will be required to pay the full cost of your tuition fees. If necessary, Government loans, scholarships or sponsorship should be sought from your country of origin. All students classed as Overseas Fee status must have funding or, if self-funded, appropriate funds in place, prior to starting the programme.

For fee status eligibility, you can find information on the [UKCISA website](#) and our [Fees and Funding webpage](#)

\*Home and Overseas Fees for subsequent years may be subject to increases year on year in line with inflation and Government Policy. This will be clearly communicated to applicants when they are offered a place, if not before.

### Student Loans

Eligible Home Fee students that are new to higher education can apply for a tuition fee loan through the Student Loans Company. You will not have to pay anything up front, and you will not have to repay anything until after you have graduated and are earning a minimum salary. For more information on the current repayment thresholds, please visit the Government Student Finance page [here](#). Depending on your residency status you may also be able to apply for a maintenance loan for living expenses from the government. This is means tested and dependent on household income.

### Scholarships and Bursaries

The National Centre for Circus Arts offers the following scholarships in the form of fee waivers or cash bursaries to eligible students each academic year.

- NCCA Means Tested Scholarships and Hardship Fund
- Leverhulme Scholarships and Hardship Fund
- Care Leaver and Estranged Student Support

Further information can be found [here](#).

## STUDENT SUPPORT

### National Centre students have access to:

- Counselling and guidance for mental health and wellbeing
- Academic and English Language support
- Physical health support
- Financial assistance

Further information on our student support services can be found [here](#).

We encourage applications from all backgrounds and offer places solely on the basis of potential and suitability for a career in circus. If you need access support for your audition, please get in touch with the [Admissions and Registry Manager](#)

## LIVING IN LONDON

The National Centre for Circus Arts is located in the heart of East London, one of the world's leading performing arts capitals. London is the most diverse city in the UK, representing over 270 nationalities and 300 languages. The National Centre is proud to call Hoxton our home – a bustling hub for creatives, birthplace of the 90s Brit Art scene and minutes away from Brick Lane, Columbia Road and Shoreditch High Street. The nightlife, restaurants, cafes and shops are second to none.

London also hosts an increasing array of circus showcases, including the London International Mime Festival, biennial festival CircusFest and Underbelly Festival. Theatres such as Jacksons Lane, Shoreditch Town Hall, the Roundhouse and Stratford Circus have helped to catapult circus into the centre of London entertainment.

### Accommodation

We appreciate that finding accommodation in London can be a daunting task, especially for international students. The National Centre for Circus Arts does not have its own student accommodation; however, we do help our new students find their own accommodation in flatshares with other National Centre students. We find it is beneficial for our students to live together due to the intensity of the degree programme and the mutual understanding of its challenges.

An information pack will be sent to successful applicants detailing helpful information on finding and securing accommodation.





## INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The National Centre for Circus Arts welcomes international students each academic year. We understand that studying in a new country is a big step and we endeavour to support our students as much as possible prior to and throughout their time studying with us. A full information pack tailored for international students will be sent to successful applicants.

### Visas and Immigration (including EU, EEA and Swiss Students)

The National Centre is registered with UK Visas and Immigration, enabling us to sponsor international students. International applicants that are accepted onto a Higher Education course at the National Centre, including those coming from the EU, EEA and Switzerland, will be required to apply for a student visa online at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) through the new [Points-Based Immigration System](#). Further guidance and information can be found on our website [here](#).

### English Language Support

Students who do not have English as a first language will have access to and be required to take part in English Language support classes as part of their study with us. Conditional offers may be given on the basis of applicants passing the Secure English Language Test (SELT). Please see entry requirements in the relevant sections for more information.

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circus  
arts

**“The degree course is the backbone of circus training in the UK.”**

**- Yaron Lifschitz - Graduate**

## TEACHERS AND STAFF



**Adrian Porter** – Head of Higher Education Delivery

Adrian is a former national squad gymnast who has been teaching circus for over 25 years. He teaches floor-based and aerial disciplines, specialising in hand to hand, Russian swing, Chinese pole and Icarian Games. He oversaw acrobatic development for the Millennium Dome Show and went on to co-write the first iteration of the Foundation degree program at the National Centre.

As a circus performer, he has shown versatility as a trampolinist at the Royal Festival Hall; troupe maison acrobat in several UK corporate shows; and several projects as an aerialist, notably John-Paul Zaccarini's Hyperactive. Adrian has toured with Cirque du Soleil as head coach, as well as acting as choreographer/dramaturge. His freelance work includes collaborations with the youth circus program at the Roundhouse London and the 2012 Paralympics closing ceremony.

He is a Board member of FEDEC and part of the Erasmus+ drive considering mobility around riggers and technicians across the world. He also sits on the board of Jacksons Lane Theatre in Highgate as well as on the steering committee for the Healthy Conservatoires Network.



**Michaela O'Connor** – Higher Education Strand Manager

Michaela began her training here at the National Centre. She has performed and taught across the globe in all things aerial, including trapeze, rope, silks, wire/ harness, group aerial equipment and clowning. Her performance credits include Dragone, Cirque du Soleil and Cameron Mackintosh.

Michaela has a postgraduate qualification in Higher Education. As well as teaching, she is a physical performer/aerialist and circus consultant.



**Amy Welbourn** – Higher Education Strand Manager

Amy has over 15 years' experience working in the performing arts and education sector. She teaches several disciplines at the National Centre, including Cyr wheel, German wheel, acrobatics, trampoline and handstands. Amy has worked internationally as an acrobat, circus performer and teacher and is also a qualified Personal Trainer and Sports Massage Therapist.

Her educational work includes a PGCHE, teaching at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Italia Conti and many other dance, drama and youth centres. Her private work includes coaching those of all levels in circus and acrobatic disciplines on a one-to-one basis for TV and West End theatre. Amy also trained as a gymnast at an international level for 15 years and coached those in the sport.



**Martha Harrison** – Higher Education Strand Manager

Martha is a circus performer and teacher from London. Her skills include static and doubles trapeze as well as hand to hand. She has performed with Mimbire, a female acrobatic company, since 2010, and is currently an associate performer.

Alongside her performance and teaching work, Martha completed her MA in Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 2013. She published an article in the Routledge Theatre, Dance and Performance Training Journal, discussing gender in circus arts.



**James McCambridge** – Teacher Education Manager

James' teaching career began as a gymnastics coach in 2004 at the City of Lisburn Salto National Gymnastics Centre, working with elite men's artistic gymnastics. James obtained a degree from the National Centre and performed internationally.

Since returning to teaching he has developed an interest in psychology and neuroscience, studying with Z Health Performance Solutions and the Academy of Applied Movement Neurology. James now uses applied neuroscience to work with circus artists and athletes as well as training coaches to implement holistic training strategies into their practice.



**Alice Jackson** – Head of Learning and Access

A trained gymnast, Alice also has a BA Hons Degree in Dance and Cultures Studies, during which she studied Contemporary and African Dance. Previously a full-time teacher at the National Circus, her role now manages the Learning and Participation Team and activities.

This includes oversight of the London Youth Circus, Centre for Advanced Training scheme and Outreach work in communities and schools. Alice occasionally teaches, but has a larger focus on overseeing and supporting Teacher Development work.



**Glen Stewart** – Director of Professional Development

Glen comes from a gymnastics background, first as a competitor and then as a coach. Glen joined the National Centre for Circus Arts as a teacher in 1999 and has enjoyed 20 years of learning and discovery in circus.

Glen's role focuses on linking together Youth Development, Higher Education and Professional Artists training and support. Glen has a particular interest in health, wellbeing, athletic performance and understanding the 'best' approaches to physical learning and how this can all be represented in all areas at the National Centre.



**Stevie Taylor** – Head of Academic Administration & Student Support

Crashing into this world in the 80s, Stevie Taylor was destined for fame, and had just the right mix of talent and drive to be accepted at the prestigious BRIT school of performing arts. Graduating with a BTec in Musical Theatre and the jazziest hands in South London, Stevie wound his way through a labyrinth of theatre jobs until he started in education at the London Contemporary Dance School. Stevie has worked in arts education for the majority of his working life.

Living vicariously through a sea of creative students, he has been inspired and supported to undertake a Postgraduate Qualification in Arts Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. His favourite artist is Basquait and he has a lot of hats.



**Joanna Young** – Admissions and Registry Manager

Joanna is passionate about the arts and comes from a dance background. She trained as part of the CAT Scheme at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, going on to complete a BA (Hons) degree at the Scottish School of Contemporary Dance in 2012.

She then went on to work as a dancer and teacher based in Yorkshire before moving over to the world of arts administration in 2017, taking up the role of School Administrator at London Contemporary Dance School (The Place). Joanna now manages the admissions and registry processes for the Higher Education department at the National Centre.



**Arran Peck** – Circus Arts Teacher (Physical Training)

Arran has worked in elite sport for over 20 years and has provided practical support to podium-level athletes and winning teams. He is currently leading the delivery of physical training at the National Centre where his remit is to minimise the risk of injury, maximise training time and optimise skilled performance. Before joining the circus, Arran worked as the Head of Athletic Development at a Premiership football club. He also spent time as a Performance Coach with professional tennis players from the UK, USA, Switzerland and the Ukraine.

Early in his career, Arran spent two Olympic cycles working for the English Institute of Sport with over 200 Team GB athletes, from over 30 different sports including track and field, judo, rowing and triathlon.



**Antigone Exton-White** – Student Support Manager

Antigone has extensive experience of both pastoral and academic support of students in vocational training, having worked for 20 years at London Contemporary Dance School before joining the National Centre in 2019.

She is a dyslexia specialist, with a postgraduate qualification in supporting students with specific learning through higher education. Antigone is also an English language teacher and has a Degree in English Literature from the University of London.

**Other Staff**

As well as our core Higher Education team, the National Centre works with over 35 teachers who teach across a range of circus disciplines, movement, theatre, acrobatics and contextual studies. Additionally, we invite guest artists to work on projects with the students each year.

Scan the QR code or click the link below for information about our teachers

[National circus teachers](#)



Our Technical and Rigging department not only ensure the safety of the students, but also teach invaluable rigging and production related skills.

Other departments include: Access, Outreach and Widening Participation, Professional Artist Development, Fundraising, Venue Hire, Corporate Services, Buildings & Facilities, Marketing and Communications, Recreational Services, Finance and HR.

**UNIVERSITY OF KENT**

The University of Kent validates our Foundation and BA (Hons) degrees. Kent work with us to assure that the quality of our programmes meets the expectations of Higher Education courses in England. On completion of the course, you will receive your award from the University of Kent and will be invited to attend graduation at Rochester Cathedral.

As a Higher Education student at the National Centre you are subject to the regulations of the University of Kent, and the National Centre ensures that its assessment procedures are in line with Kent's regulations.

University of Kent regulations:

[kent.ac.uk/regulations](http://kent.ac.uk/regulations)



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When our students graduate from National Centre for Circus Arts, we actively continue to engage with them as artists and support their work.

Our Open Training for professional circus artists, allows students, graduates and circus artists to access independent training in our building. Through access to our space, graduates are able to continue to train and grow, seeking inspiration and collaborating with other circus professionals.

Our Open Training members also receive our weekly newsletter that details any circus opportunities and the timetable of availability in our building. After graduating, students are eligible for one year free training at National Circus.

Is teaching circus a passion of yours? Assistant teacher and teacher roles are available here regularly and we encourage both students and graduates to apply.



- **Tara Talland** - Graduate (pictured)

## WHERE WILL IT TAKE YOU?

Our graduates go on to various routes of employment such as performance, directing, teaching, postgraduate study and more. Many remain closely linked to the organisation as professional members, accessing training and networking opportunities. Some graduates take on teaching roles at the National Centre, particularly with our youth and recreational programmes. Those who perform around the world often return to train in the space whenever they are back in the UK.

Here are some of our graduates' stories.



### **Tara Talland**

BA, 2021

Tara and her graduating class presented their devised pieces as NCCA's first live performance in two years following the COVID lockdowns. So, after a long dry spell of shuttered venues, it was especially sweet for Tara to tour with Troupe Vertigo's A Cirque Holiday in December 2021. Subsequently, she creates original works for aerial hoop and hair suspension for Bunga Bunga's acclaimed cabaret Bunga Va Pazza and the newly re-envisioned Wonderville.

Under the direction of Ockham's Razor's Alex Harvey & Charlotte Mooney, she reprised her devised piece for aerial hoop Ode to the Party Girl for the 2022 National Centre for Circus Arts Gala. Tara continues to seek inspiration from literature, planning a multi-aerialist piece broadly based on Jean Genet's The Maids, a nuanced psychological exploration of provisional freedom and unfulfilled potential.



### **Lydia Harper**

BA, 2013

Lydia Harper is a circus director and artist specialising in Chinese Pole, Cloud and Wall Running. She has toured worldwide with Cirque du Soleil's TORUK - The First Flight as an acrobat and artistic coach, as well as being a founding member of Silver Lining, a contemporary circus company formed with other National Centre graduates and an original cast member of Extraordinary Bodies.

After training at East15 for an MA in Theatre Directing, Lydia set up a new company LEAP for which she has directed FATcrobat and Measure Up. She is also an associate artist for Tangled Feet, Metta Theatre and Acrobatic Arts and is currently working as Circus Director for Extraordinary Bodies. Lydia teaches across programmes at the National Centre for Circus Arts and is a lecturer at London Metropolitan University.

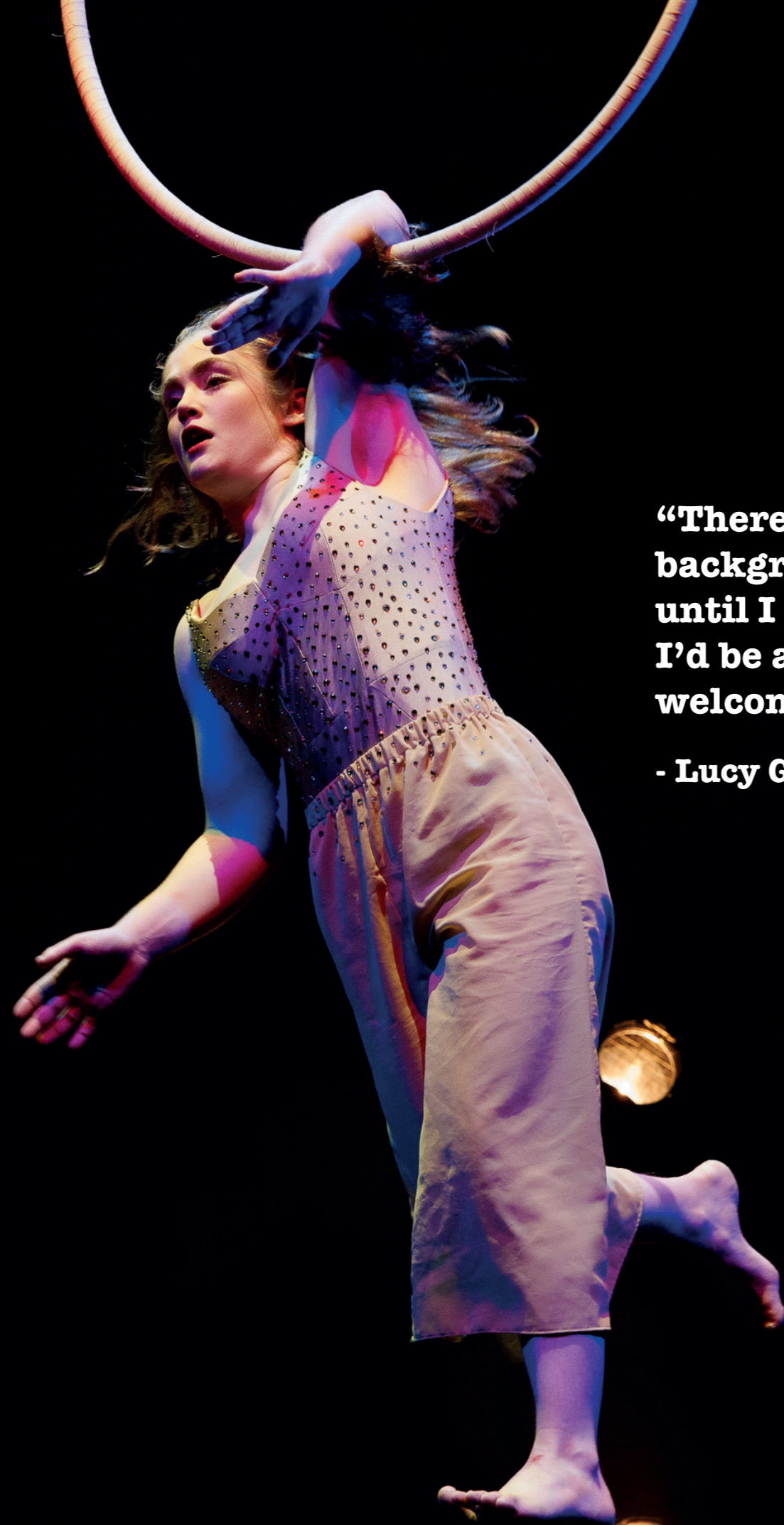


### **Atilio Nunes Surian**

FD, 2021

Since graduating from the National Centre, Atilio has been working on his personal projects. He has started a contemporary circus company in Brazil with a few young artists that has been the source of a lot of development and research, especially in outdoor circus. He has been working on social projects and took the leading role in a few productions, such as As 6 Faces do Cubo, also directed by him, and the musical Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory.

"Being at the National Centre has given me the freedom and the technical skills to experiment on my own terms and carry on with my creative processes even after finishing the course. It's provided me with a toolbox from different areas that I can always go back to and friends I'll carry for a lifetime! It's such a supportive space with amazing people around, and honestly, who wouldn't want to jump through the fire for their graduation?"



**“There's a sense of anything is possible. I come from a dance background and had never touched a piece of aerial equipment until I started at the National Centre. At first I really didn't think I'd be able to do it and that I wasn't at the right level, but I was so welcomed in and supported through my journey.”**

**- Lucy Gilroy - Graduate 2022 (pictured)**

## GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Admissions and Registry Manager

### **Joanna Young**

[joanna@nationalcircus.org.uk](mailto:joanna@nationalcircus.org.uk)  
020 7613 8244

National Centre for Circus Arts  
Coronet Street, London, N1 6HD

Check out our [FAQ'S page](#)

### How to find us

Old Street tube - 5mins

Shoreditch High Street Overground - 10 mins

Hoxton Overground - 10 mins

Liverpool Street - 15 mins

St Pancras International - 2 stops, Northern Line

