

Artistic Planning Director

NCO Job Recruitment Pack



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1. About National Children's Orchestras

Purpose

Our purpose is to champion the life-changing power of music.

Mission

Together, we are using the power of music to create a supportive community that enriches lives.

We empower children to uncover the joy of orchestral music, unleash their creativity, realise their ambitions and embrace a future filled with endless possibilities. The confidence, resilience and teamwork learned through music become skills for life, wherever each young musician's journey takes them.

National Children's Orchestras (NCO) was founded in 1978 by Vivienne Price MBE who recognised a lack of provision for younger aged musicians to engage with orchestral music. NCO set out to provide opportunities for children aged 8-14 to discover the joy of orchestral playing at the highest level, during a period of their lives when many give up their music as they transition to secondary school. Fast forward 48 years, there are approximately 24,000 NCO alumni, many of whom are professional musicians and music teachers across the globe.

Today, nearly 2,000 children aged 8-14 connect with NCO each year. They take part through:

- Auditioned orchestral weeks and weekends
- Non-auditioned workshops
- Activities with schools and hubs
- Free tickets to concerts

The next few years will be defined by a significant expansion of free, non-auditioned activities and initiatives, increasing NCO's reach and impact by enabling thousands more children to play together, to be creative and to embrace the possibilities that music can offer them.



Our values influence everything we do and how we do it.

We believe no *dream* is too big.

When we're free to dream, explore, create and play, the world opens up. In music and in life, dream big - you never know what incredible things you'll discover along the way.

Dare to Dream



**We believe orchestral music shapes
*skills and hearts.***

Orchestral music is a wondrous world that nurtures empathy, resilience, and the courage to face whatever life throws our way. It builds strength of spirit, deepening connections to ourselves and the world around us.

Strength of spirit



**We believe everyone has their own
*brilliance.***

Everyone has a unique potential waiting to shine. In a supportive, inclusive environment, we can discover our own brilliance, find our voice, and grow with confidence and creativity.

Every Voice Matters



**We believe in the power of
*community.***

Our power lies in our unity; we grow together, support each other, and become something greater as one.


The Power of Us



Play together. Be unstoppable.

2. Our commitments

Our commitments to our administrative team include:

- A professional development plan for each employee that includes training, support and mentoring and can lead to progression within the organisation
 - Employee Health Plan
 - Real Living Wage Employer
 - Networking opportunities within Bristol and the music/wider arts sector
 - Two team away-days each year when no one does any work!
 - A light, fully accessible and modern office in Bristol's creative quarter, Paintworks, managed by Ethical Property with friendly neighbours also working in charities and organisations that make life better
 - Empathetic arrangements for hybrid working that enable staff to manage their work/life balance and provide parents/carers, or people with disabilities, with the flexibility they need
 - 23 days' annual leave per year (pro rata) plus the working days between Christmas and New Year plus Public Holidays
 - Pension Scheme
 - A rota for car parking and secure bike storage on site
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3. About the role

Artistic Planning Director

Reports to: Chief Executive

Key relationships: NCO team, creative freelancers (conductors, composers, guest artists, creative and wellbeing leads & music tutors)

Status: Permanent, annualised hours contract.

100 days pa inclusive of annual leave - 23 days pa, plus bank holidays, for full time employees, pro rata for this role

Salary: Negotiable

Location: NCO office is based at Streamline, Paintworks, Bristol. This role will require at least 1 Monday per fortnight at NCO's office, excluding busy activity periods and bank holidays.

This role will also require a shared presence at NCO activity which takes place across England at weekends, during school holidays and Easter bank holidays. This is estimated to be no more than 40 days per year and is included in the 100 days per year.

Scope

Reporting to the Chief Executive, and as part of NCO's collaborative Senior Management Team, this new and exciting role will be responsible for leading the curation of NCO's annual artistic programme across all areas of activity.

The role requires providing oversight and leadership for NCO's creative freelance workforce including conductors, guest artists, composers, wellbeing and creative leads and will oversee the pool of c. 90 freelance music tutors.

The Artistic Planning Director will work closely with NCO's Music Librarian to ensure that all music, including commissions and arrangements, is thoroughly prepared and will give due consideration to specific instrumentation requirements ahead of activity.



Key Responsibilities

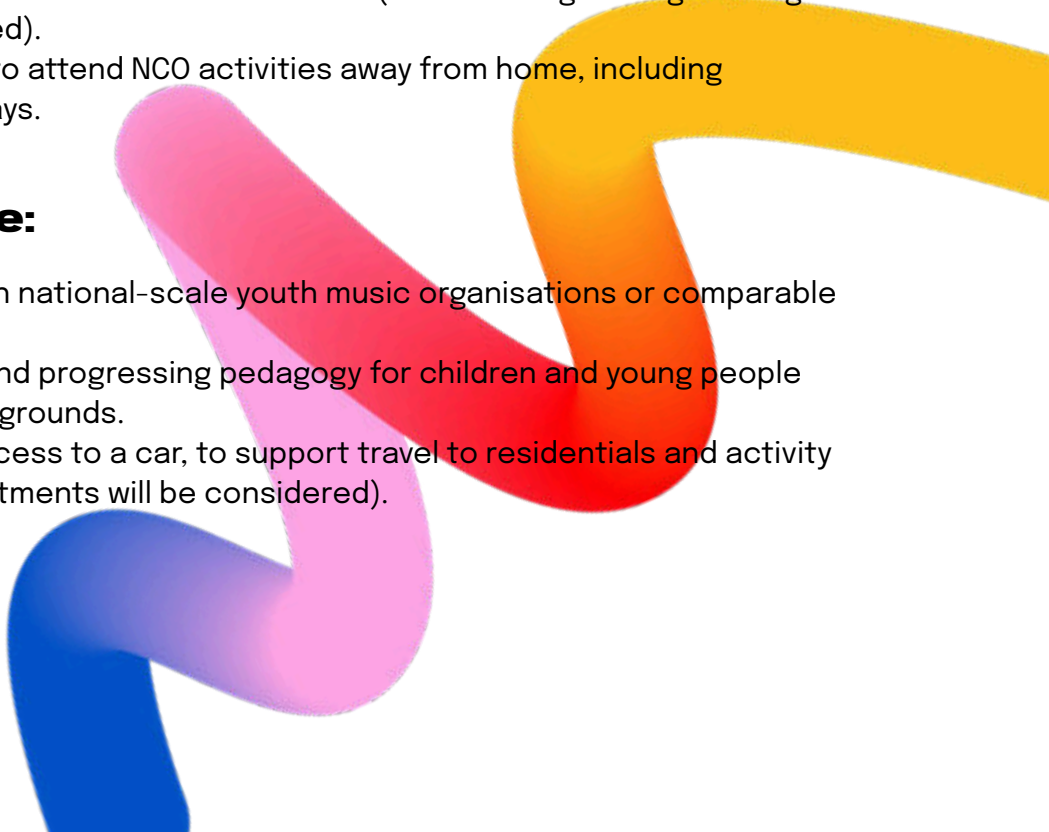
- Lead on the curation of NCO's annual artistic programme, to be approved by the CEO, in line with the organisation's purpose, strategic priorities and values for all activities, namely Orchestral Weeks, Orchestral Weekends, Orchestral Days, Partnership workshops, Schools' Concerts, digital projects and any other engagement initiatives.
- Collaborate with members of NCO's Senior Management Team in the development of artistic programmes to ensure they support its strategic priorities particularly in terms of musical aspiration, access and progression, diversity and inclusion, community engagement and audience development.
- Select conductors and guest artists, working closely with them to develop repertoire choices and creative plans for relevant activities.
- Engage and support NCO's Creative Leads in the successful delivery of Surround Sound at Orchestral Weeks, agreeing content, brief, training and delivery plan.
- Oversee and manage NCO's participation in ABRSM's young composers' scheme.
- Commission and oversee the production of new work and arrangements as required including special arrangements that cater for different playing levels.
- Oversee and monitor NCO's large pool of freelance music tutors, supporting their professional development and liaising with the Programme and Orchestras Director to recommend current and new tutors each year across all activities.
- Work closely with the Music Librarian to ensure that all music scores, parts and excerpts are thoroughly prepared and inform and support specific instrumentation requirements ahead of activity, liaising with tutors and Orchestra Managers when required.
- Liaise with the Programme and Orchestras and Communications teams to ensure that NCO's annual auditions process remains fit for purpose and take forward any additional supportive actions as required (e.g. instrumental support).
- As part of NCO's Senior Management Team, contribute towards organisational strategy and major funding applications as well as attend quarterly board meetings and internal meetings including regular team meetings and activity debriefs.
- Share attendance at activities with the CEO and members of the Senior Management Team, acting as a senior point of contact for all artistic matters when present.
- Work with the Programme and Orchestras and Communications Team to support the delivery of webinars (e.g. auditions, annual launches and one-off themed webinars.)
- Chair the Musicians Advisory Group consisting of music tutors and conductors to receive and act on feedback and to share and check future artistic plans.
- Comply and uphold NCO's safeguarding and GDPR policies and all relevant procedures.

4. Who we are looking for

Someone with the following:

- A highly skilled and experienced musician, with substantial professional experience within orchestral performance and/or music education (typically gained over five years or more).
- Deep and wide-ranging knowledge of orchestral repertoire, alongside a strong understanding of and affinity with NCO's artistic vision, values, and programming principles.
- A proven track record of co-curating ambitious, high-quality and diverse artistic programmes, balancing multiple perspectives and priorities to create exceptional musical experiences for young musicians, audiences, and communities.
- Demonstrable experience of working with composers and arrangers, including the commissioning and development of new work.
- Strong professional networks within the UK music sector, with the ability to identify, engage, and work collaboratively with conductors, guest artists, and specialist practitioners.
- A clear commitment to excellence in teaching and orchestral coaching for younger musicians, with experience of developing, supporting, and inspiring a diverse pool of expert music tutors.
- A practical and solutions-focused approach to musical and logistical challenges, ensuring matters such as repertoire preparation, parts, scores, and instrument requirements are anticipated and managed effectively.
- Excellent organisational skills, with the ability to manage multiple projects and competing deadlines simultaneously.
- A collaborative, empathetic, and reflective working style; an active listener who values teamwork and keeps the musical, personal, and social impact of NCO for children at the heart of their practice.
- An understanding of the importance of safeguarding and pastoral care for children and young people within a music education context (Level 3 Safeguarding training will be provided where required).
- Willingness and flexibility to attend NCO activities away from home, including weekends and bank holidays.

You may also have:

- Experience of working with national-scale youth music organisations or comparable ensemble settings.
 - Familiarity with inclusive and progressing pedagogy for children and young people from a wide range of backgrounds.
 - The ability to drive and access to a car, to support travel to residential and activity venues (reasonable adjustments will be considered).
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5. Safeguarding

NCO is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children in our programme. We ensure that our organisation has a range of policies and procedures in place so that we can do everything possible to safeguard our members. Applicants should possess relevant enhanced DBS documentation or be willing to undergo a new check with NCO.

[You can read NCO's Safeguarding Policy on our website.](#)

6. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

You can read [NCO's Equality Statement on our website.](#)

We are committed to being an Equal Opportunities employer and attracting diverse talent from sections of the community currently underrepresented in the culture sector to help us to develop a more diverse workforce.

[Please fill in this anonymous equal opportunities form before completing your application.](#)



7. How to Apply

[All applications must be submitted using this application form.](#)

You can find the application questions listed below to allow you to prepare them in advance, but you do need to complete the form to apply for the role. You will also need to supply the names and contact details for two references.

If we can support you by providing this information in an alternative format, please let us know by emailing info@nco.org.uk

- 1. In place of a cover letter, please use this space to tell us a bit more about why you want to work at NCO and what attracts you to this role (500 words max.)*
- 2. Please refer to the 'Key Responsibilities' and tell us how your skills and experience meet the responsibilities outlined (500 words max.)*
- 3. Please refer to the 'We are looking' for section and provide evidence of how your personal attributes, skills and experience meet the criteria. (500 words max.)*
- 4. Please use this space to succinctly list your work experience and education history in chronological order.*
- 5. Please detail your relevant qualifications and any other training you have undertaken.*
- 6. If you have any gaps in your work experience or education and would like to let us know, you can tell us about them here or at interview. (optional)*

If you would like to talk to us about this role before you apply, please email Sophie Lewis (Chief Executive) s.lewis@nco.org.uk from 18th May.

Deadline: Monday 8th June, 9am.

First Round Interviews w.c. 15th June, at NCO's office in Bristol,
Second Round Interviews (if needed) tbc