



**BISHOPSGATE
INSTITUTE**

The programme: information for candidates

This document is intended to provide candidates with extensive context and background to the organisation’s programme and priorities, as well as our ethos and charitable mission. It should be read in conjunction with the job description and other documents, as contained in the pack for applicants.

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1. Introduction & context

Bishopsgate Institute is the delivery arm of the Bishopsgate Foundation, founded in 1894 for “the promotion of the education of the public”. We are a small, independent charity with our own extraordinary premises at the crossroads of the City, Spitalfields and the East End.

The charity is financially independent, relying on generating income from its venue hire activity, alongside rental income from its endowment. Please see ***Bishopsgate Institute - Past Present Future*** and ***New business***

development and opportunities ahead documents for details on our vision and our ambition to secure a sustainable increase in income for the Institute.

2. Staff development and wellbeing

Our motto is “I grow old, not lazy” and we apply this philosophy throughout our work. We have adopted the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing, both for our programming and our people. We invest in Mental Health First Aid training for all permanent staff. The Institute supports flexible working, where possible, and contributes to staff social events. Permanent staff that have passed probation are entitled to a 75% discount on multi-session courses run as part of our programme, and these include yoga, meditation, languages, photography, history, music and dance.

Although we have some very long-serving members of the team, we are an incubator of talent which often means people move on. We encourage our staff to learn as much as possible while they are with us and be proactive about their personal as well as professional development, ensuring they are in the best possible shape for their next challenge.

Our permanent staffing numbers around 35, with a pool of casual workers covering shifts where additional help is required.

3. Audiences

We are an adult learning organisation, whether through formal, classroom-based sessions, informal social dances or through other formats. We offer learning for the pleasure of learning, not for accreditation or qualifications.

Whilst many of our students, researchers, visitors and customers live and work in the surrounding area, we attract people from all over London, the UK and internationally to participate in our activity. We programme for adults and by subject, not by demographic, which means we offer opportunities for adults to come together to do things they love, united by that interest and usually with a wide range of ages, backgrounds and identities.

If the motto *Senesco non segnesco*¹ resonates with you, you are a potential Bishopsgate Institute customer and advocate.

The new Head of Audiences & Communications will be charged with articulating the audience development strategy and plan, then reporting on our impact and our success. Given the mix of drop-in and booked activity, as well as free and charged-for, audience journeys are not always easy to condense. However, our new box office and CRM systems will make us more able to analyse these, tailor what we offer and how we communicate.

Most people engage with us in person, in the building, but we are increasing our digital offer as well as our online presences, for which the new website (due winter 2019-20) will be a vital component.

¹ Please see Bishopsgate Institute Past Present Future for more detail.

Whether our customers comprise City workers or local residents, heritage enthusiasts or London-wide social dancers, adult learners wanting to delve deeply into a passion or subject, researchers, performers, students, international experts, people who enjoy a weekly opportunity to socialise over a shared interest, yoga practitioners who prefer our quiet and non-gym classes and clientele, people for whom Liverpool Street / Crossrail is their way home, people whose imminent parents-in-law speak a language other than English, or anyone else for whom we provide something they seek, we are looking forward to improving our engagement with these audiences.

4. The programme

As you will have seen from your research, Bishopsgate Institute offers what could be a confusingly diverse range of events and activity for audiences to enjoy. We programme talks, courses, social dances, walking tours and workshops. We operate a specialist collections library with free access to anyone, and tours to introduce people to what we hold. We produce musical theatre shows, concerts and cabarets and co-produce large-scale performance projects with partners such as Duckie and the London Musical Theatre Orchestra.

Meanwhile, we hire out any spare capacity in our spaces in order to generate much-needed income to fund the programme and operation of the Institute. This is mostly during weekday daytimes and includes exams, conferences, meetings, rehearsals and the National Blood Donation Service.

5. Not a receiving house

We programme and own the cultural activity that happens at the Institute ourselves. If it's a public event, it's part of our programme. This means we don't hire out our spaces to others wanting to put on shows, such as visiting companies, and we don't permit others to run their own classes or courses from here.

We do, however, work in partnership with selected organisations that share our objectives and in collaboration with which, we can offer high-quality experiences to a shared audience.

6. Incubator

Bishopsgate Institute provides adults with opportunities to learn, nurture their talent and skills, extend their knowledge and develop themselves, all in our extraordinary spaces.

Some of these opportunities are packaged, such as courses for adults, talks or social dances. Some are less structured, such as free access to the quiet study space that is the Reading Room (with free Wi-Fi), our annual Open House invitation to explore the building and our history, or free access to our special collections and archives for research or inspiration.

7. Orchestra and Dancers in Residence

As part of the incubator process and our commitment to working in partnership, the Institute has an Orchestra in Residence (the London Musical Theatre Orchestra www.lmto.org) and Dancers in Residence (Swing Patrol London www.swingpatrol.co.uk). These vibrant, entrepreneurial organisations with vast and ever-expanding audiences contribute regular content to our programme and generate frequent collaborations and new ideas. Shared objectives and combined resources enable us to offer unique and interesting opportunities to our shared audiences. These partnerships ensure our extraordinary spaces are being used for public benefit in new ways and generate a valuable sense of belonging through a home base for the organisations, which in turn support our wider offer.

8. How is the programme decided?

Our mission is “the promotion of the education of the public”, so we need everything we offer to have a learning, reflection, research, practice or personal development component. Of course, this can and does take many forms, including performance and creation of content.

We develop the learning programme as a whole, rather than independent programmes of talks or courses. We also do not place venue hire and the charitable programme in some sort of competition with one another for space. The programming team needs to think holistically and to collaborate with the Campaigns and Delivery teams, including Duty Managers, to plan and execute excellent experiences and activities.

Finally, we remain true to our brand which is professional and playful, independent, irreverent, and developmental.

9. The Chief Executive / Artistic Director

Francesca has a dual role and leads the organisation creatively and operationally. While she delegates responsibility for development of agreed projects, priorities and strands, she retains close involvement with the detail of campaigns and visual identity, as well as leading specific projects, such as executive producing our musical theatre productions.

She has a particular interest and network in the performing arts and is passionate about every possible opportunity to use our special collections and archives to inspire content and audiences in innovative ways.

Hers are the final decisions on everything in the programme, informed by the expertise of those in the Content and Campaigns teams and guided by their recommendations to achieve agreed objectives.

10. New website, CRM and box office systems

Our offer isn't easy to encapsulate in a three-word pitch. People don't usually find us online by chance, but even if they know us and what they are looking for, we have all-too-frequent complaints about our website. Navigation on our

website, which was new in 2011, is far from intuitive, the search function is obstructive (unsophisticated) and our box office system makes it far harder than necessary to find and book something.

We have hired a web development agency to deliver a much-improved online offer and have signed up with Spektrix to replace the box office system. These improvements will go live in late November 2019 and will make an enormous difference to how many places we can sell on the courses, talks and events we already run, to say nothing of the opportunities to increase our audience engagement.

11. Particular priorities and ideas for 2019-20 and onwards

Throughout 2017 and 2018, we rebuilt the programme, consolidating success to include a very popular programme of talks, archive tours and launches, occasional concerts and performances and regular social dances. The programme of courses for adults, workshops and study days has been rebuilt, and growth is healthy. Working with the Campaigns team, we intend to achieve full utilisation of our courses and events whilst subsidising and nurturing new components as they find their audience and profile.

The existing learning programme and events are now being developed further whilst we also explore new opportunities. We are particularly focused on developing our performing arts offer, including our courses strand, in order to build on the success of recent pilot projects such as cabarets, piano bars, Christmas concerts and musical theatre productions.

Music has been part of the programme since the Institute opened, and free lunchtime concerts had been offered since 1948. After a period of review, concerts are returning to Bishopsgate Institute from October 2019 and focus strongly on the fully-restored 1927 Rosewood Steinway Model D Grand Piano once owned by Dame Myra Hess (we call this piano "Myra"). We invite different musicians and musical directors who have been inspired by working with Myra to curate concerts presenting repertoire that Myra suggests to them. The series is called "My Myra" and began in September 2018.

In November 2018, we co-produced with the London Musical Theatre Orchestra and Howard Goodall (the composer) a concert staging of *Girlfriends*. The brand new orchestration was by Simon Nathan and the performances were recorded, now available as the first live cast recording ever of the piece. Howard returns in early October for an in-conversation evening with Edward Seckerson, covering his work and inspiration (as well as much-loved musicals, he wrote the *Mr Bean* and *Blackadder* theme tunes among a lot of film score and TV work, as well as oratorios and other choral works).

A choir returned to our learning programme offer in January 2019, potentially leading to performances, as well as introducing content for all levels of ability

and skill relating to music appreciation, harmony and theory, as well as performance, technique and repertoire.

Dance has been part of the programme since 1894 when the Institute opened with a grand ball. Monthly ballroom and swing social dances are now an important part of our annual offer, and we're now developing them and our dance classes and workshops further. These currently comprise tap, latin and ballroom, swing dances including Balboa and Blues and adult ballet.

We have started by hosting festivals and dance competitions, including in the pro-am category, and programming study weekends and workshops on specific dances or technique. We host the twice-monthly Pink Jukebox same-sex ballroom social dance club and, in response to demand, have added practice sessions to support couples in their preparation for competitions. A well-established women-only social dance monthly event (Waltzing With Hilda renamed Sapphires) moved to Bishopsgate Institute from September 2019. We now hold the Peggy Spencer and Pink Jukebox ballroom archives, as well as a rich array of social and cultural materials featuring social dancing, styling and fashion throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

Building on our successful acting classes, musical theatre productions and cabarets, we are keen to ensure more regular performance slots and skills development opportunities for different levels of experience and confidence. After trialling some Edinburgh Fringe preview activity this year, we intend to programme a series of Fringe previews next summer.

We would like to look again at comedy, particularly within the refurbished Reading Room, and cabaret and piano bars, combining a social occasion with excellent performances. This might also generate content for the learning programme, such as comedy writing or improv courses.

There will be further medium- and large-scale musical theatre productions from 2020, subject to scheduling and rights, projects which require research, planning and scoping before confirmation.

We have partnered with Duckie once more on a large-scale LGBT+ heritage project called "Princess" which culminates in several large-scale performances and happenings throughout the Institute building in late September 2020.

We will continue to offer discounted hire rates for rehearsal spaces, where possible, to support others to develop creative projects and performances beyond the Institute (professional and not).

12. Spaces and timing constraints

The refurbishment and reconfiguration of the Reading Room space will increase our capacity for smaller events from the current 50 to 120+ seats, now we have secured planning permission and listed building consent from

the City of London. However, this space will only be available for specific events or activity outside the opening hours of the Library (so, weekday evenings and weekends).

We are almost at full capacity in our available classrooms spaces during weekday lunchtimes and midweek evenings, which means the additional content we plan needs to be scheduled for Friday evenings and during weekend daytimes and evenings.

There is also the opportunity in some spaces to explore daytime learning for those without formal 9-5 commitments elsewhere. However, there is further work to be done to determine demand.

Finally, we have further capacity in the large spaces (Great and Upper Halls), particularly on Saturday daytimes and some weekday evenings.

13. Collecting areas and themes for the programme

As your research will have indicated, Bishopsgate Institute's printed and archival collections cover a variety of subject areas exploring the experiences of everyday people, facilitating the study of history from below. With a special focus on activities in and around the Capital, the archives and collections we hold can be grouped in to seven major collecting areas:

- Co-operation
- Feminist and Women's History
- Freethought and Humanism
- Labour and Socialist History
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer History
- London History
- Protest and Campaigning.

We are also home to a growing number of photographic collections (with a focus on street photography), and oral history collections created by heritage projects and community groups.

A great deal of our programming, and in particular courses, talks, open days, drop-ins and lates, are inspired directly by our collections. We usually run pop-up displays at events, and the Programme Manager works closely with the collections team to determine potential speakers and archive launch events, especially as we receive new collections. A fundamental [part of the Programme Manager role is to maintain this flow of communication and idea development with the team that manages the collections.

20 September 2019