



# NICE MEETING

NETWORK OF INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS EXCHANGE

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## Information Pack & Programme



16-18 May 2025  
Galway, Ireland

O'Donoghue Centre  
University of Galway







# NICE MEETING PROGRAMME

**FRIDAY**  
16.05.2025  
09:00 - 17:30



9:00-9:45	<b>COFFEE &amp; REGISTRATION</b>	Meet your fellow NICE colleagues!
9:45-10:45	<b>OPENING PLENARY</b>	Pete Duncan
10:45-11	<b>INTRO TO HUPR</b>	Dr. Dean Kriellaars
11:00-11:15	COFFEE	
11:15-11:45	<b>SESSION SUMMARIES</b>	
11:45-12:45	<b>THE POWER OF NETWORKS</b>	EYCO, Caravan, FEDEC, ISACS
12:45-14:00	LUNCH	
14:00-14:30	<b>RIGGERS &amp; EVERY KNOT MATTERS</b>	Lorenzo Albiero FEDEC
14:00-17:15	<b>CLOWN ACTIVISM</b>	Robyn Hambrook
14:45-17:15	<b>CONSTRUCTING QUALITY MOVEMENT EXPERIENCES USING PHYSICAL LITERACY</b>	Dr. Dean Kriellaars
17:15-17:30	<b>CLOSING PLENARY</b>	





NICE MEETING

# PROGRAMME

**SATURDAY**

17.05.2025

09:00 - 18:00

9:00-9:30

**COFFEE**

9:30-9:45

**PLENARY**

Pete Duncan

9:45-11:00

**SOCIAL & CONTEMPORARY  
CIRCUS IN CHALLENGING  
LIVING CONDITIONS**

Rose Abou Elias, Cathrina  
Ighnatiou, Noor Abo Alrob,  
Mohammed Shafee

9:45-11:15

**CONFIDENCE BY  
DESIGN**

Dr. Dean Kriellaars

11:15-11:30

**COFFEE**

11:30-12:30

**THE IMPACT OF  
SOCIAL MEDIA**

Dr. Jayne Rodgers

11:30-12:30

**MOVING TO  
PERFORMANCE**

Pete Duncan

13:00-14:30

**LUNCH**

14:30-16:00

**OPEN SPACE  
TECHNOLOGY**

Lynn Carroll  
Pete Duncan

16:15-17:45

**MANAGING RISK  
IN CIRCUS**

Dr. Dean Kriellaars

16:15-17:45

**FAILING BETTER**

Davi Hori  
Dr. Ian Walsh

17:45-18:00

**CLOSING  
PLENARY**



# NICE MEETING PROGRAMME

**SUNDAY**  
18.05.2025  
09:00 - 17:00

9:15-9:30	<b>COFFEE</b>	
9:30-9:45	<b>PLENARY</b>	Pete Duncan
9:45-11:00	<b>CIRCUS IN SCHOOLS</b>	Pete Duncan, Doren Nielsen, Maeve Keane, Wolfgang Pruiskén
9:45-11:00	<b>THE RISE OF RIGHT WING POLITICS &amp; ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY SPACES</b>	Cameron Keighron
11:00-11:15	<b>COFFEE</b>	
11:15-12:15	<b>CIRCUS ARTS INSTRUCTION IN/AT SCHOOLS - CANADA</b>	Dr. Dean Kriellaars
11:15-12:15	<b>YOUTH ACCREDITATION</b>	Katja Tuuli Becca Clayton
12:30-14:00	<b>LUNCH IN FOYER</b>	
14:00-15:00	<b>FOSTERING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS</b>	Dr. Dean Kriellaars
14:00-15:00	<b>THE ONION &amp; THE CAR PARK</b>	Pete Duncan
15:00-15:15	<b>COFFEE</b>	
15:15-17:00	<b>EVALUATION TOOLS &amp; END PLENARY</b>	Pete Duncan
19:30-21:30	<b>EYCO CABARET AT GALWAY COMMUNITY CIRCUS</b>	



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## **Opening Plenary - *Pete Duncan***

A welcoming session that includes an orientation, key information about the programme, and introductions to some of the people shaping the conference.

We'll kick things off with dynamic opening debates on a variety of topics—an opportunity for everyone to share perspectives, connect informally, and help shape a collective understanding of the key issues at the intersection of circus and education. You'll also hear from special guests as they share insights into their work, philosophies, and what they're bringing to the event.

## **Intro to HUPR - *Dr. Dean Kriellaars***

Dr. Dean Kriellaars is joining us from Ecole Nationale de Cirque Montreal. As Scientific Director, Dean will be presenting an outline of the programme of HUPR- Research Centre for Human Potential based in the school.

## **The Power of Networks - *Taina Kopra, President of Caravan, Lorenzo Albiero, International Project Manager for FEDEC, Lynn Carroll, President of EYCO and Lucy Medlycott, Director of ISACS***

It's rare to get three of the four major European networks in one room, but EYCO, Caravan and FEDEC have all come along to NICE! They will be joined by the Irish Street Arts, Circus and Spectacle Network (ISACS). Taina, Lorenzo, Lynn and Lucy will discuss their work and place in the European circus landscape, and the role networks play for their members.

## **RIGGERS & Every Knot Matters - *Lorenzo Albiero, FEDEC***

RIGGERS (React, Invent, Get together for a Goal: Expertise in Rigging Services) has been developed to address the needs of riggers in professional circus schools, with the aim of improving the quality of safety measures and creating an international community willing to exchange skills, advice and know-how to pass on to future generations. Lorenzo Albiero presents the results of this programme, and will explain the transition towards FEDEC's new project – Every Knot Matters – in which EYCO is a partner.



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**FRIDAY**  
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## **Constructing Quality Movement Experiences using Physical Literacy**

*- Dr. Dean Kriellaars*

This workshop will provide the foundation for creating quality movement experiences for holistic development of participants in which movement is used to develop physical, psychological, social and creative abilities. The workshop will provide practical examples and experiences to foster positive movement experiences by constructing positive challenges for all participants independent of level of ability. Participants will learn the physical literacy-based principles for intentional coupling of competence and confidence, audience progressions, preventing social inhibition, maximizing connectedness, fostering agency and creative potential.

## **The Activist Clown - Robyn Hambrook**

Do you want to change the world? Would you like to explore the potential of clowning and circus to be political and tackle serious issues? Join Robyn Hambrook for experiments in mischief and resistance in this practical and playful workshop exploring the subversive power of the CLOWN. We will explore the playful, transformative and political mechanisms of the clown through games, flow and improvisation. All levels of experience welcome.

The clown is a powerful tool for resistance. Their power derives in part from the unique place they occupy – a liminal space, on the fringes, a commentator, a rebel, a soothsayer, able to resist social conventions and hold a mirror up to society's absurd mechanisms. Come and explore the clown's regenerative and empowering potential.



# NICE MEETING SESSION INFO

**SATURDAY**  
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## **Social & Contemporary Circus in Challenging Living Conditions**

*Rose Abou Elias and Cathrina Ighnatiou from Cirquenciel (Lebanon), Noor Abo Alrob from The Palestinian Circus School, and Mohammed Shafie from Nablus Circus School (Palestine)*

Amid war, displacement, and occupation, circus becomes a language of hope. Rose, Cathrina, Noor and Mohammed share powerful stories from their work. Cirquenciel reflects on Lebanon's deep crises—from economic collapse and pandemic to the devastation of the 2023–2024 war—showing how circus instructors stepped up as frontline psychosocial supporters for displaced communities. From Palestine, speakers reveal how circus builds resilience, resistance, and connection in the face of occupation, especially since the escalation of violence in October 2023. Through the lens of Nablus, one of Palestine's most challenging environments, they spotlight the everyday courage of artists and youth. This session weaves testimony, video, and lived experience into a moving portrait of circus as survival.

## **Confidence by Design - Dr. Dean Kriellaars**

As part of the durability design concept, this session will describe the key components of establishing a confidence culture. This session will describe the benefits of intentional linkage of confidence & competence. These benefits include enhanced performance, reduced risk of injury, faster and fuller return from injury and continued participation. Participants will learn about the various types of confidence sources (coaches, directors, team members, therapists, etc) and how individuals value these sources. Participants in the workshop will co-create approaches to eliminate confidence erosion practices, as well as to foster intentional confidence building activities.

## **The Impact of Social Media - Dr. Jayne Rodgers**

For many people, being online brings benefits and challenges. For young people, these can feel amplified. Chances to connect, to learn, to create are intrinsic to digital technologies. This session will explore what we can do to harness the good, while helping young people to stay safe online. The session will focus on social media use, particularly on the impact of influencers, online bullying and the negative and positive aspects of marketing to young people. The session will explore how we can help young people feel confident online and how circus practitioners can reach them in exciting, interesting ways.



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## **Moving to Performance** - *Pete Duncan*

An interactive workshop exploring the barriers to performing and how to mitigate them, then experiencing and exchanging activities in three areas: improvisation and being comfortable on stage; starting from a skills base and being creative; ways of presenting skills in different formats.

The session will conclude with looking at adapting activities and transferability. This workshop will have physical activities/experience.

## **Open Space Technology** - *Lynn Carroll and Pete Duncan*

Open Space Technology (OST) is a methodology of running large group meetings or events around a central topic where participants create the agenda themselves. The process is designed to be highly participatory, inclusive and collaborative.

Open Space Principles:

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- When it's over, it's over.

Also, one law:

- The law of two feet

What burning topics do you think need discussing? Bring your ideas along and put them into Open Space.

## **Managing Risk in Circus** - *Dr. Dean Kriellaars*

This workshop will provide a new framework for the analysis of any circus activity. The concepts of surplus safety (safe as possible) and adequate safety (safe as necessary) will be discussed. This will be the foundation for understanding "safety creep" - the unwanted creation of surplus safety.

Examples will include traumatic injuries in circus, chest binding practices and the setup of standards for safety in public schools running circus arts instruction in physical education. This neutral risk framework is beneficial for insurance, liability, creating safety guidelines, and implementation of circus activities in novel settings.



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## **Failing Better** - *Davi Hora and Dr. Ian Walsh*

Dr. Ian Walsh and Galway Community Circus trainer Davi Hora present an interactive session on a collaborative project between University of Galway and Galway Community Circus.

Heartbeat is a workshop which promotes an aesthetic experience where participants can explore elements of juggling and its intersections with expressive dance and physical theater. The workshop is part of the module Failing better, building resilience through circus arts, delivered at University of Galway. No juggling experience necessary.



# NICE MEETING SESSION INFO

**SUNDAY**  
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## **Circus in Schools in UK & Germany** - *Soren Neilsen, Teo Greenstreet, Maeve Keane, Peter Duncan and Wolfgang Pruisken*

The Circus in Schools circle is a working sub-group under Circusworks. We are 4 practitioners who are all working in schools using Circus as a tool to engage children and young people in learning. We meet once a month to discuss ways and strategies for introducing more circus to more schools; writing up advocacy documents, exchanging promo material and ways of 'selling' circus to schools and discussing ways of collecting impact data for use for funding applications, to mention a few of our work tasks. We all share the strong belief that Circus is an incredibly valuable artform which engages children and young people from all backgrounds in learning whilst greatly increasing confidence, trust and social skills. In this talk we would like to present examples of what we each do with, in, at and around schools, how we 'sell' circus to schools and how circus can enhance the school curriculum.

## **The Rise of Right Wing Politics and its Impact on Community Spaces** - *Cameron Keighron*

Collaborative session facilitated by Cameron Keighron. Cameron (they/them) is a community educator, advocate, and Director of AMACH! LGBT Galway, a community development organisation dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for the LGBT+ community in Galway City and County. They also serve on the board of Galway Community Circus. With a background in science, health advocacy, and grassroots activism, Cameron brings a unique lens to conversations about power, belonging, and community care.

## **Circus Arts Instruction in and at School - Canada** - *Dr. Dean Kriellaars*

This session will describe the factors that were critical for the integration of circus arts instruction (CAI) in physical education (PE) in public schools, and the integration of performing arts into the formal physical education curriculum. This session will describe two Canadian jurisdictions where CAI was implemented for students from kindergarten to grade 8. Differences will be highlighted between CAI in PE, social circus at school and youth circus clubs at school will be discussed. Issues discussed will include standard equipment kits, equipment costs, installation of fixed rigged aerials, safety standards, and teacher training. Barriers to implementations in other justifications will also be discussed.



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## **Youth Accreditation - *Katja Tuuli & Becca Clayton***

Katja Tuuli from Sorin Sirkus & Becca Clayton from Galway Community Circus present a workshop in Erasmus + youth accreditation. This is the funding that has made this event possible. Learn how to apply and host future NICE events, youth exchanges and more!

## **Fostering Inclusive Movement Environments - *Dr. Dean Kriellaars***

This session will describe a successful program, termed SENSE-ational schools for inclusion of participants with different sensory and physical abilities in various movement contexts. This session will highlight differences between “inclusive” and “adapted” approaches. The foundation of this program utilized “the circus way” as well as physical literacy as guiding principles. This session will also highlight specialized equipment and the design of spaces for inclusion.

## **The Onion and the Car Park - *Pete Duncan***

This workshop is about exploring ideas for training, capacity building and mentoring. Theories drawn from Learner Centred Learning and Playwork will be used to look at:

- Frames for exploring what students need and what can be offered
- Designing courses with levels of challenge, expectation, knowledge
- Creating learner agreements

Case studies will be offered on the design of courses and individual placements. The session will conclude with looking at adapting thinking and transferability. The workshop is focussed on thinking and discussing.

## **Concluding Penary - *Pete Duncan***

The final session of the conference will look at reflection and evaluation. A fast paced workshop looking at why we evaluate – for individuals, for organisations and funders. A range of evaluation activities will be offered together with examples of their use. There will be an evaluation of the event designed and run live.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS



## **Dr. Dean Kriellaars**

Dr. Dean Kriellaars is a world-renowned expert in physical literacy, durability, and the performing arts. A neuroscientist and exercise physiologist, he is a global leader in movement science and a passionate advocate for inclusive, high-quality physical activity. Dr. Kriellaars serves as Associate Dean of Research at the College of Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Manitoba, and as Scientific Director at the Center for Circus Arts Research at École Nationale de Cirque in Montreal. His pioneering work with Cirque du Soleil focuses on performance enhancement, injury prevention, and resilience in high-performance circus environments. He developed the PLAY assessment tools and co-created Passport for Life for PHE Canada. Dean's Human Performance Laboratory supports cutting-edge research in motor skills, gender equity, and risky play. Widely recognized for his innovation and community leadership, Dr. Kriellaars continues to shape physical education and health policy, championing the idea that learning to move is as essential as literacy or numeracy.



## **Dr. Jayne Rodgers**

Dr Jayne Rodgers is an academic and digital practitioner with over 20 years' experience in the digital ecosystem, including as a Lead Trainer on the Google Digital Garage project. Her research strengths include psychological explorations of social media use and influencer impact, with particular expertise in consumer behaviour online. Her most recent research projects include an investigation into young people's responses to TikTok marketing, the limitations of online public health messaging for diverse demographics and the challenges facing advertising bans in a digital context.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS

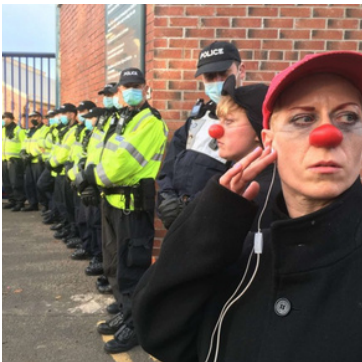


## **Pete Duncan**

As a Director of CircusWorks, the UK youth circus network and co-founder of Circus Eruption, Pete is a dedicated force in the UK circus education scene. As a freelance trainer with Co-Train, he delivers mentoring, training, and capacity-building support both online and in person, collaborating on a diverse range of creative and educational projects.

A familiar face at CircusWorks festivals, conferences, and Un-Conferences, he actively contributes to the growth and innovation of the youth circus community. His involvement spans across Europe, including leading roles in masterclasses and initiatives like the “Learner Centred Learning” project, which champions more inclusive and responsive teaching approaches.

In the UK, he brings expertise to local communities through partnerships with organisations such as the Circus House in Manchester, and the University of the Third Age—proving that circus is for everyone, at every age.



## **Robyn Hambrook**

Robyn is a Bristol-based director, performer, and teacher with over 20 years’ experience in clowning, physical theatre, circus, and street arts. Holding an MA in Circus Directing and a Diploma in Physical Theatre Practice, she has trained with renowned practitioners such as Holly Stoppit, Giovanni Fusetti, and Philippe Gaulier. Her recent focus explores the intersection of clowning and activism, particularly through her Master’s research, *Small Circus Acts of Resistance*, and work with the Bristol Rebel Clowns and Trickster Laboratory. Robyn has collaborated internationally with Jay Jordan, Clown Me In, LM Bogad, Hilary Ramsden, and The Yes Men. In 2020, she co-founded The Online Clown Academy, delivering digital clown training during the pandemic. Her exploration into activist clowning includes Bouffon training and politically charged workshops like the Nomadic Rebel Clown Academy and the Clown Congress. Robyn continues to innovate through collaborative spaces that merge performance and political engagement.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS



## **Taina Kopra**

Taina Kopra, founder and artistic director of Sorin Sirkus, has supervised and been responsible of the pedagogic work for 40 years at Sorin Sirkus. She has been not only a circus teacher and artistic director but a visionary, who has developed and made path for Finnish youth and social circus education. She has received several awards and acknowledgements from youth work, artistic work and performances and significant work for circus in Tampere and whole Finland.

With Sorin Sirkus as one of the co-founders of Caravan back in 2008, she played since then a crucial role with network and its Board. Taina is a president of Caravan.



## **Noor Abo Alrob**

Noor Abo Alrob is a circus director, artist and trainer. He joined the Palestinian Circus in 2008. Since then, he was involved in different projects related to contemporary circus, social circus, alternative education, arts management, and many others around the world. Currently he is the artistic officer at the Palestinian Circus. Noor has completed his BA in administrative and economic sciences, and his MA in Arts and culture management.



## **Rose Abou Elias**

Rose Abou Elias is currently Head of the Youth program at arcenciel and in charge of the strategic development if cirquenciel, holding a Bachelor in public relations & advertising and an MA in corporate communications from the Lebanese University. Involved in the field of youth work since 2016 as a mentor, trainer of sports for social impact and project manager, joined the circus since 2018 as a flower sticks student. Rose had gained significant experience in social development through various international and local trainings, is also an alumni of the Circus Trans-Formation training class of 2024.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS



## **Cathrina Ighantios**

Cathrina Ighantios is currently managing cirquenciel and is an aerial performer and instructor, holding a Bachelor in sports and physical education from the Lebanese University and a Master of Business Administration from AUL. Involved in crisis response and disaster management since 2010 in the disaster management unit with the Lebanese Red Cross, has long term experience in social circus projects planning, execution and development through her work at cirquenciel since 2016. Cathrina manages cirquenciel since 2021 and is an alumni of the Circus Trans-Formation program class of 2024.



## **Lynn Carroll**

Lynn Carroll is CEO of Galway Community Circus, Director of CircusWorks and President of EYCO – the European Youth Circus Organisation. She is an internationally renowned expert in circus and education. Throughout her career she has performed globally as a multi-disciplined circus artist with some of the most pioneering and acclaimed contemporary circus companies of the time, as well as being at the forefront of developing the UK youth circus sector for nearly 40 years.



## **Davi Hora**

Davi Hora has been circus teacher and artist for the past 15 years, he has graduated at the National Circus school of Brazil (2010-2013), Centre of Movement Studies Angel Vianna (2012-2014). He is a lead trainer for Caravan's Circus Transformation courses, and has worked in partnership with the University of Galway to develop resilience training through circus as part of the Designing Futures modules.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS



## **Ian Walsh**

Ian R. Walsh is Lecturer in Drama and Theatre Studies at University of Galway. He has published in peer-reviewed journals and edited collections. Books include Contemporary Irish Theatre: Histories and Theories (Palgrave, 2024) co-written with Charlotte McIvor, 'Staging Europe at the Gate', special issue of Review of Irish Studies in Europe, 4.1 (2021) co-edited with Siobhán O'Gorman and Elaine Sisson. Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960 (Palgrave, 2021) co-edited with Ondrej Pilny and Ruud van den Beuken. The Theatre of Enda Walsh (Peter Lang, 2019) co-edited with Mary Caulfield; Experimental Irish Theatre: After W.B Yeats (Palgrave, 2012). From 2019-2022 Ian was PI for University of Galway on Circus ++ which developed the first international BA in Youth and Social Circus (Erasmus +). From 2019-2023 he was the PI for the monitoring and evaluation of Wires Crossed (Creative Europe) and from 2023-24 Research Evaluator for Circus Trans-Formation Advanced (Erasmus +). He also served as Chair of Galway Community Circus 2022-2024.



## **Cameron Keighron**

Cameron Keighron (they/them) is a community educator, advocate, and Director of AMACH! LGBT Galway, a community development organisation dedicated to creating inclusive spaces for the LGBT+ community in Galway City and County. They also serve on the board of Galway Community Circus . With a background in science, health advocacy, and grassroots activism, Cameron brings a unique lens to conversations about power, belonging, and community care.



## **Katja Tuuli**

Katja is a experienced project manager in the performing arts and civic & social organization industry. She has worked in field of theatre and circus for 20 years teaching, directing, coaching, facilitating and performing. She has mostly done work in field of applied drama and social circus. She is also a group therapist (psychodrama as a method) and has a wide understanding in sociology and pedagogy.



# NICE MEETING SPEAKERS



## **Søren Nielsen**

Søren Nielsen is the co-founder and co-director of Scarabeus Aerial Theatre, a circus company who is one of the pioneers in the UK of site-specific aerial performances in unusual places. Scarabeus has also been a pioneer in using aerial skills as a social circus tool in primary schools. For over 30 years they have worked with children, young people and families in London and England using aerial skills to build confidence, trust, social skills and a sense of place; offering high quality arts projects with a deep impact to people and communities, who would not normally have access to such experiences. They do extensive fundraising to be able to offer activities free of charge to schools and communities. One of our most successful projects, Flying into Physics, uses aerial art to teach science to children in an experiential and kinaesthetic way aligning directly with the science curriculum thereby engaging children in learning in a non-academic way.



## **Lorenzo Albiero**

International Project Manager at FEDEC, the leading international network for professional circus education. With master's degrees in International Relations and Human Resources, Lorenzo has experience facilitating international youth projects and developing educational initiatives under Erasmus+ & Creative Europe programmes. Passionate about intercultural communication, empowerment, and lifelong learning, he works to strengthen and promote circus education across Europe and beyond.



## **Maeve Keane**

Maeve Keane is Development Coordinator at Galway Community Circus. With a BA in Music and an MSc in marketing, Maeve has developed marketing campaigns for numerous brands and worked across development and production in the TV industry. Having a keen interest in sport and physical activity, Maeve's position at GCC has allowed her to marry her passion for the arts and physical movement.



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## **Becca Clayton**

Becca has worked in the Circus, Street Arts and Spectacle world for over 15 years in project management, event production and European programmes. She previously worked at Out There Arts (UK) and their International Festival of Circus and Street Arts, before moving to Galway in 2018 to be the Producer for Europe's largest participatory highwire spectacle – LifeLine. She is now Chief Operating Officer for Galway Community Circus, managing their European programmes, partnership projects, and supporting the CEO with the company administration and finances.



## **Teo Greenstreet**

Teo has over 30 years experience in growing circus. He is currently Centre Director of Greentop Community Circus Centre and Development Director at Curious School of Puppetry, formerly co-founder and CEO of The Circus Space, now National Centre for Circus Arts, and CEO The Media Centre. He is a freelance creative enterprise consultant and facilitator supporting numerous project across a range of arts and learning environments. He performed and taught for 5 years and is a fellow of the Clore Leadership Programme.

Teo Greenstreet grows creative opportunities, particularly for young people, to stimulate changes needed to cultivate a happier and more sustainable future. Teo draws on 30 years of leading creative organisations and projects. He is a consultant and Centre Director of Greentop Community Circus Centre where he is developing engagement initiatives with the Roma community and primary school children in deprived areas.



## **Mohammed Shafee**

Mohammed Shafee is the General Director of the Nablus Circus school (Assirk Assaghir Association) in Nablus, Palestine. He is a cultural leader and advocate for children's rights, using circus arts as a tool for social change. Mohammed has led several community-based projects focusing on creative education and active citizenship. He believes in the power of art to foster resilience, freedom, and collective healing under occupation.