



Tender for Curatorship of The Gathering 2026

Belfast 26 & 27 May 2026

Overview

Since 2005, [Performing Arts Forum](#) annual conference, *The Gathering*, has been a flagship event in Ireland's performing arts calendar. Taking place each May, it brings together artists, arts workers, organisations, and funders for two days of connection, learning, and inspiration.

In 2026, *The Gathering* returns to **Belfast**, based at the Lyric Theatre and other locations in the city. We are looking to **shake up the format**, bringing fresh ideas and energy to the artistic and speaker programmes and the creative production of the event.

We invite tenders from individuals or teams to take on the **curatorship of the 2026 Gathering**, encompassing:

- Artistic programme
- Speaker programme
- Creative producer

This could be one person or a team working collaboratively.

About The Gathering

What it is

- A two-day conference with attendance of 350+ people.
- Audience: a mix of independent artists and arts workers and organisations (arts centres, festivals, production companies, funders)

The Experience

The Gathering combines:

- **Networking:** meaningful connections across the sector.
- **Learning & Inspiration:** engaging sessions addressing current challenges and opportunities.
- **Hospitality & Socialising:** all meals included, with evening events designed to keep the group together and foster connection and networking.
- **Artistic moments:** curated performances to inspire and reflect the vitality of the sector.

Past evening activities have included performances, quizzes, karaoke, and creative group activities.

What We're Looking For in 2026

We want to reimagine and revitalise The Gathering for its return to Belfast by:

- Proposing a compelling **artistic programme** that could be mixed through the two days.
- Designing an engaging and relevant **speaker programme**, responding to the needs and interests of the sector.
- Bringing creative vision and flair to the **overall production**, ensuring that the event is memorable, inclusive, and inspiring.

We welcome proposals that:

- Think beyond the current format and suggest new approaches to sessions, interactions, and experiences.
- Actively consider the breadth of the membership and attendees across the island when designing sessions.
- Keep inclusivity and accessibility at the heart of the programme.
- Are mindful of the practical realities of a two-day event (26 & 27 May 2026) with a diverse audience and finite budget.

Scope of the Tender

The appointed curator(s) will:

- Present an overall vision for *The Gathering*, and meet regularly with the Performing Arts Forum team and sub-committee to report on progress and refine plans.
- Curate the artistic programme identifying and securing artists and performances working with artists based locally in Belfast and in the North. The intention is to present work that reflects the diversity, quality, and energy to an audience of 350+

colleagues from across the island. It should be noted that there will also be an evening meal and activities that forms part of the event.

- Curate the **speaker programme**, including identifying, inviting, and liaising with speakers, facilitators, and moderators.
- Deliver a final, confirmed programme no later than **27 March 2026**.
- Collaborate closely with the Performing Arts Forum team and host venues to ensure the programme is delivered effectively and with high impact.
- Be present and active on the event days to ensure smooth delivery of the programme and to support speakers, artists, and the PAF team.

The curator(s) will take responsibility for:

- Contacting, booking, and confirming speakers and artists, including negotiating and agreeing fees and terms in line with a confirmed budget.
- Organising and collecting biogs, photos, and other materials required for the conference programme and publicity.
- Providing timely information and updates to the team to support marketing, production, and delivery of the event.
- Write an overall description for the two days that can be used in marketing materials.
- Collaborating on travel and accommodation for programmed speakers and artists, in liaison with the Performing Arts Forum team.
- Briefing all speakers ahead of the event to ensure they are well-prepared and aligned with the overall programme.
- Liaising with speakers in terms of presentations and access requirements.
- Working with the production management team and AV company on logistics, scheduling, resourcing, presentations, staging, recordings, and other technical requirements.

Support from the Performing Arts Forum Team

The appointed curator(s) will work closely with the Performing Arts Forum (PAF) team and can expect the following support throughout the process:

- **Project management & coordination:** The PAF team will schedule and facilitate regular check-in meetings between the curator(s), the team, and the Gathering sub-committee.
- **Payments:** The PAF team will manage payments to all booked artists, speakers, and facilitators, based on information and agreements provided by the curator(s).
- **Budget management:** The PAF team will oversee the overall event budget and manage disbursement of agreed programme budgets in consultation with the curator(s).
- **Venue liaison:** The PAF team will handle formal agreements and logistical arrangements with the Lyric Theatre and other venues, working collaboratively with the curator(s).
- **Travel & accommodation booking:** Upon receiving confirmed travel and accommodation details from the curator(s), the PAF team will book and confirm these arrangements for speakers and artists.

- **Marketing & communications:** The PAF team will design, produce, and distribute all marketing and programme materials, using content and copy provided by the curator(s).
- **Ticketing & registration:** The PAF team will manage event ticketing, registration, and communications with attendees.
- **Production management:** The PAF team will engage and oversee production and AV teams, working closely with the curator(s) to ensure all technical requirements are met.

This collaborative approach allows the curator(s) to concentrate on the creative vision, curatorial decisions, and relationship-building with artists and speakers, while the PAF team manages administrative and logistical delivery.

Fee & Timeline

- A fee will be agreed with the successful curator(s), commensurate with experience and scope of the proposal. The range is €10,000 - €12,000.
- Additional budget will be available for programme delivery (e.g., speaker fees, artists' fees, production costs).
- Work will begin in autumn 2025 with regular check-ins through to the event in May 2026.

Deliverables & Timeline

Deliverable	Description	Deadline
Progress Meetings	Attend regular meetings with Performing Arts Forum team and sub-committee to review and refine plans.	Ongoing — approx. fortnightly
Initial Vision & Concept	Present an overall vision and theme for <i>The Gathering</i> , with initial ideas for artistic and speaker programmes. This will be to the PAF team and sub-committee.	November 2025
Early Bird Ticket Sales	Provision of short overall approach text that can be used by team to open sales.	December 2025
Draft Programme Outline	Submit a draft outline of artistic and speaker programmes, identifying proposed artists, speakers, and session formats. Option Bs, Cs and contingencies should also be included at this stage.	January 2026

Final Programme Submission	Deliver a final, confirmed programme, including all artists, speakers, and session details. Confirm all speakers and artists, including fees and terms agreed.	27 March 2026
Programme Materials	Provide biographical notes, photos, and any additional information required for the digital programme.	April 2026
Logistics & Briefings	Liaise with speakers, artists, and production team to finalise travel, accommodation, technical requirements etc.	April–May 2026
Event Delivery	In tandem with PAF team, lead on the creative production and delivery of the programme across both days, on site.	May 2026

How to Apply

Please submit a proposal (max. 4 pages) including:

- Your vision for the 2026 Gathering, particularly how you would “shake up” the format.
- An outline of your approach to curating the artistic and speaker programmes and overseeing creative production.
- Examples of relevant past experience and your CV.
- Indication of whether you are applying as an individual or team.

Proposals should be emailed to **irma@performingartsforum.ie** by **24 September 2025**.

Shortlisted candidates may be invited for a conversation before final selection.