

Applications now open for the Forkbeard Fantasy Award 2025

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection is delighted to welcome applications for the inaugural £15,000 Forkbeard Fantasy Award. The award is being established through a generous endowment from pioneering performance company Forkbeard Fantasy and will support the process of creating new work and engagement with their archive.

After fifty successful years of multi-media performance, films, animations, performance poetry, street theatre, interactive exhibitions and mechanical sculptures across the UK and internationally, Forkbeard Fantasy officially closed shop in 2023, donating their wonderful archive to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection.

The Forkbeard Fantasy Award is intended to help support and sustain artists' careers. It is aimed at helping collaborations of two or more artists/performers to research, develop and experiment towards the creation of a new work. The availability of Forkbeard's archive to burrow into and explore is intended to inspire new directions and creativity.

For Forkbeard Fantasy, as a small group of artists with different artistic skills themselves, devising the work together was central to their philosophy from their very outset in the early 1970s. The Forkbeard artists did not come from theatre backgrounds and saw themselves as part of a new and blossoming movement in art and creativity with humour at its heart. From the outset, they were experimenting with emerging technologies as well as old ones, learning as they went. They enjoyed exploring the worlds of science, nature and the environment, themes often central to their work and connections all the more vital today.

Having undergone decades of experience of applying for funding, some good and some not so good, Forkbeard are keen that the process for applicants is as uncomplicated and fair as possible.

Applications are invited from collaborations of at least two or more UK based applicants with at least 5 years experience.

Applications should include the following information:

1. A written proposal no longer than 750 words; or a video no longer than 5 minutes. Proposals should cover why you are applying for the Forkbeard Fantasy Award: how and why do you want to respond to the Forkbeard Fantasy Archive; how you will approach the development of the new work and its eventual form; and how the process will involve making as well as elements of performance.
2. A project plan of no more than 2 A4 pages, including an outline budget and proposed timescale. You should consider things like travel, accommodation and subsistence costs while working on your

ideas. It is recommended the constructional work should aim to be as low budget as possible, finding inventive ways of using recycled and found materials for instance.

3. Background information of no more than 3 A4 pages about yourselves and your previous artistic endeavours, with images, photographs or drawings, or a maximum 3 minute video.

Applications will be assessed by a panel comprising a mix of artist/performers, producers, scholars and archivists. Interviews with the shortlisted applicants will be part of the selection process. Unfortunately, due to the high number of applications we expect to receive we will be unable to provide feedback, apart from to those invited to interview.

Criteria to be used for assessment will include:

1. Is the project plan viable?
2. Is the proposal genuinely collaborative?
3. Does it include making and performing?
4. Does the proposal meaningfully engage with Forkbeard Fantasy's work & archive?
5. What difference will the award make to the holders at this point in their career?

Shortlisted applicants invited to interview will be notified by the 4th April.

Interviews will take place online on the 24th April.

Theatre Collection staff will support award holders in providing access to the archive throughout the period of the award. Further practical, technical and mentoring support may also be made available through discussion with the award holders.

60% of the funds will be made available at the start of the project, with a further 30% at a midway point with an update of progress and a timeline for completion. The project must not exceed 1 year. The award holders will be asked to return for a reflective session with members of the award panel and to produce a report in a mutually agreed format that the Theatre Collection will be able to share online. The remaining 10% of the funds will be transferred to Award holders on receipt of the report.

Applications are to be submitted to theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk, with **'Forkbeard Fantasy Award 2025'** in the subject line, before midnight on 16th March 2025.

For further information and questions, please contact theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk.

The Forkbeard Fantasy Award is dedicated to the memory of Forkbeard's Company Manager Janice May (1953 - 2024).