

Applications now open for the Forkbeard Fantasy Award 2026

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection is delighted to welcome applications for the £15,000 Forkbeard Fantasy Award. The award has been established through a generous endowment from pioneering performance company Forkbeard Fantasy to 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 for two or more artists/performers and intended to give them the time to experiment with their creative skills and explore new methods of expression through collaboration. 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.

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 two or more applicants with at least 5 years' experience. Applicants can be based anywhere in the UK but do need to be able to visit Bristol to access the archive. Due to the high volume of applications received last year, applicants may only apply as part of one collaboration each.

Applications should include the following information:

1. A written proposal no longer than 750 words; or a video no longer than 3 minutes. You are welcome to use images and drawings in your proposal. Proposals should cover why you are applying for the Forkbeard Fantasy Award: how and why 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 live 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 2-minute video. Please do not include external links to further work.

Please submit written applications as a pdf or Google Doc and videos as mp4. We particularly welcome applications relating to topics that Forkbeard Fantasy frequently engaged with, such as nature, the environment and humour.

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. Is there an element of live performance in the proposed work?
5. Does the proposal meaningfully engage with Forkbeard Fantasy's work & archive?
6. Does the project include an element of experimentation?
7. Will the project lead to an original work?
8. Will the award make a difference to the holders at this point in their career?

This award is intended to give artists time and space for research and development of a new piece. As such, the piece does not have to be performed by the end of the award but there must be an intention to perform at some point.

**Shortlisted applicants invited to interview will be notified by the 2nd April.
Interviews will take place online on the 13th April.**

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.

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 2026**' in the subject line, before midnight on 15th February 2026.

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