

Dublin City Council
Bram Stoker Festival

Friday 31st October - Monday 3rd November 2025



Open Call - How To Apply Guide

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival - Open Call 2025

This document contains important information about Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival and how to make an application as part of our 2025 Open Call.

We strongly advise you read this document carefully and give yourself plenty of time before starting your application.

We recommend you submit your application at least 48 hours ahead of the deadline in case you encounter any technical difficulties.

This year, in order to coincide with Hallowe'en Weekend, the festival will take place from Friday 31st October - Monday 3rd November. These dates replace our previously advertised dates over the October Bank Holiday Weekend.

About Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival

Between Friday 31st October - Monday 3rd November, Dubliners will celebrate the life and legacy of Bram Stoker with four days and nights of deadly adventures at Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival. What started as a primarily literary festival in 2012 has become one of Dublin's biggest and most-anticipated festivals, with tens of thousands of people converging on Dublin City Centre annually.

The festival has a broad programming focus, which draws from Stoker, his life, his work, the Dublin of his time and extends into the Gothic, the supernatural and the Victorian.

At its core, the festival puts a contemporary spin on Stoker's legacy, but how this happens can take myriad forms. What follows are some guiding principles on what we're looking for and some examples of events presented in the last few years.

Open Call

This open call is for festival-ready events and activities which may be included in Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival 2025. These ideas must have a real connection to or be thematically linked to Bram Stoker, his works, his life, his philosophy, Victorian Dublin, all things Gothic, the supernatural or the mysterious.

Be adventurous, bold and ambitious. We want hairs standing on necks, horror and terror, devilishly good adventures and unique, fun experiences in interesting locations.

Go on, scare us...!

What We're Intrigued By: Themes of the Festival

The festival has a broad programming focus. We're intrigued by ideas for events which are rooted in our themes:

- Dublin's Victorian & Gothic Architecture
- Locations tied to Stoker including his residences and places of work
- Stoker's lesser known works, from "The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions" to "Famous Imposters" and Gothic works from his era
- The people in Stoker's life: his wife Florence Balcombe; Henry Irving; his social-reformer mother Charlotte Mathilda Blake Thornley; his literary and theatrical circle of friends and acquaintances including Oscar Wilde, Henry Irving & Walt Whitman
- The food, people, customs, costumes, traditions and supernatural beliefs of the time
- Fresh perspectives on Dracula - what new lens can we view this seminal work through?
- Stoker's research on, and interest in, Irish and international supernatural traditions and tales
- Irish supernatural folklore and myth and how this can speak to and entertain modern audiences
- Seances, spiritualism, the occult and other Victorian practices
- Events in the Irish language

As well as this, we're open to hearing how your idea is a match for our audience: Dubliners of all ages, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, who are looking for fun, intriguing and unique experiences over the October Bank Holiday weekend.

What We're Looking For

Over the years, we've presented major outdoor spectacles and installations; intimate experiences on hallowed grounds; world premieres of new scores for classic films; award-winning theatre productions; outdoor circus at night in dark, foreboding forests; comedy in nightclubs; choral ensembles in darkened libraries; food tours where participants dined on custom menus; elaborate banquets in sacred crypts; large-scale spectacles including parades, water-based installations and immersive experiences. See page 17-28 for examples of previous productions

We're looking for events, productions, experiences and shows that have the potential to captivate our audience. Regardless of your artform or discipline, we're looking for events which speak to the legacy of Bram Stoker and not just events which are rooted in *Dracula*.

- Proposals for events and activities that have a clear connection to or are thematically-linked to Bram Stoker, his works, his life, his philosophy, Victorian Dublin, all things Gothic, the supernatural or the mysterious
- Proposals for events suitable for children under 12 at our outdoor pop-up Victorian fun park for families, *Stokerland*
 - Stokerland specific proposals can include street performance, low tech theatre shows, comedy, activities, workshops and games, installation pieces, music - all types of events will be considered.
 - There is a performance tent within the park, as well as open spaces for outdoor work and a small workshop tent.
- Events and activities that will appeal to and attract all types of audiences, with a particular focus on local Dublin audiences, communities and families.
- We're open to ideas that cover all artforms and ideas. Proposals can include;
 - theatre, visual art (e.g. street art, photography, film, installation), performance art, food, literature, spoken word, comedy, debates, talks, panel discussions, dance, street spectacle, site specific, spoken word, design, outdoor events for families, music, architecture, circus, food events, cabaret, storytelling - this list is not exhaustive and don't feel like you have to fit into a particular category!

Budget Available

The maximum budget that is available is €15,000.

The Festival may decide to programme a number of proposals with smaller budgets or one extraordinary proposal with a budget for the full amount available.

Proposal budgets should:

- Be submitted on a excel worksheet / workbook.
- Include all event and activity costs, including but not limited to: all fees (artist, crew, designers, speaker fees etc), travel, accommodation, venue hire, equipment hire (including LX and sound).
- **All artists and crew must be paid** - we will not look favourably on applications that do not include payment for artists and crew.
- The budget should also include any expected income from other sources, including box office receipts / grants, if applicable.
- The budget should include the proposed box office split if the event is paid for and ticketed - e.g Box Office Split (and percentage in the applicants favour) / Guarantee versus Split.
- Any sponsorship income needs to be agreed with the festival.
- If including box office income, please include the suggested ticket price.
 - The ticket price should take into account 5% credit card commission fees and VAT, if applicable.
 - Our ticketing partner TakeYourSeats, charges a €1 booking fee for tickets booked.
 - Ticket prices are advertised as ticket price plus booking fee e.g. €15 + €1 Booking Fee.
- The festival has a policy of making all ticket prices accessible and this should be taken into account.
- The festival needs to consider if your proposal is good value for money for the audience reach - please note that an event, production or activity that costs €15,000 but has a small audience reach is unlikely to be successful.

A detailed budget must be included in your supporting documentation. You do not need to apply for the maximum budget.

What We're Not Looking For

Productions seeking Development Funding: Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival **can not fund the development** of events or productions which reach us via the Open Call. The festival is not a funding or grant application body; what we are looking for is events, experiences, productions or shows which are festival and audience ready. We welcome applications where additional funding is not yet in place, but only on the understanding that the festival will not cover any budgetary gaps should additional funding applications, from other funding bodies, be unsuccessful.

Programming Challenges

Short Films: As the festival is not a dedicated film festival, we struggle to programme individual short films unless an agreement with a cinema is in place at application stage.

Bands: Applications from bands to play gigs which are not heavily influenced by our programming pillars or themes tend not to be successful.

Site Specific Work: The festival has a history of commissioning and programming site specific work and outdoor work. Outdoor venues and site specific venues can require special permissions. The additional costs of site specific and outdoor work should be considered, including but not limited to; gennie hire, rain cover, security costs.

International Applicants: Applicants from outside of Ireland should consider and include all of the local production costs in relation to their event and activity, e.g. crew, designers, equipment hire, accommodation and travel costs. International applicants should also demonstrate how they will contribute to the marketing activity to promote the event in Ireland.

Previously Presented Work: While we do not expect blanket exclusivity on all proposed events, we are unlikely to programme events which have additional show dates in Dublin within a short window of our festival dates.

Accessibility

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival strives to be as inclusive and barrier-free as possible and is committed to improving accessibility for audience members.

Accessibility Audit : In 2024, we worked with an accessibility consultant, Louise Bruton, on auditing festival venues to help us better communicate and describe accessibility at the festival: we made comprehensive accessibility information available for all events on our website, including: information on arrival (including transport routes); descriptions of the entrance, the interior of the space / venue, the performance space and seating areas, the lighting and sound; accessible bathrooms; accessibility throughout the building including the bar; availability of braille menus, whether loop systems were in place and whether or not a quiet space was available in the venue.

Ticketing: For ticketed events, wheelchair accessible tickets and ISL tickets are available at the point of purchase and include free companion tickets, removing the need for people to contact the box office directly after ticket purchase.

ISL (Irish Sign Language) Interpreted Performances: In 2024, we doubled the number of ISL interpreted events at the festival. We aim to increase that number again in 2025.

Relaxed Performances : In 2024, we held relaxed performances at Stokerland, our pop-up family fun-park in St. Patrick's Park, and at The Haunting of Gusty Nook in Axis, Ballymun. Social stories were available from our website in advance. These sessions are designed to welcome people who would benefit from a more relaxed environment, including people who identify as neurodiverse, people on the autistic spectrum, sensory and communication disorders, people with ADHD, ADD, Tourette's Syndrome, or with learning disabilities.

We aim to do more in 2025. **If called for an interview, we will ask you to consider how we can work with you to make your event more inclusive and accessible** for audiences and for your artists and crew.

Who Should Submit

Our team is ready to work with artists, producers and event organisers who have **proven experience in mounting a festival-ready production.**

We're looking for ideas from people who are confident in delivering all aspects required to stage an event - from venue sourcing to budgeting, production management to marketing. We're there to support you every step of the way, but **we need to know that you have previous experience** and can build a team of people to assist you.

Applicants should be confidently able to:

- Develop and manage a realistic budget for your event
- Build a team of people to support the production, delivery, staging and marketing of your event
- Liaise with venues and the festival's box office staff, production staff, volunteers and producers
- Develop and submit marketing and PR copy and work with our marketing and PR team on all areas of publicising your event
- Meet deadlines and keep the festival up-to-date on the progress of your event, from pre-production to immediately following the event

We are interested in hearing from artists, event producers, venues, promoters, collaborative partners, artistic collectives, longstanding partnerships or artistic collaborations set up exclusively for this festival.

Proposals are welcomed from people of all nationalities, races, cultural backgrounds, religions, languages, different abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, socioeconomic status and geographic regions.

All applicants must be aged 18+.

Assessment Criteria

Your proposal will be assessed by members of the festival team, including both Co-Directors and an independent professional with relevant experience.

We will consider the following criteria in assessing all submissions:

- The proposal must have a real connection to or be thematically linked to Bram Stoker, his works, his life, his philosophy, Victorian Dublin, all things Gothic, the supernatural or the mysterious (see pages 4 and 5)
- Experience of the applicant(s) in producing events and activities
- Ability of the applicant(s) to coordinate, or assist in the coordination of, marketing and PR activity to support the event, particularly where the event has a box-office or ticket sales expectation
- Originality and quality of the proposal
- Proposals that are feasible and that can be produced within budget and the time-scale
 - Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival will be held from Friday 31st October - Monday 3rd November and your event / activity must be held during these dates
- Availability of a suitable venue for the event / activity
 - You may include a venue in your proposal but note that the festival team may feel upon discussion that a venue of the Festival's choosing may be more suitable for the event / activity
- How well the proposal fits into the overall festival programme (e.g. your proposal may be too similar to existing elements of the festival programme) - Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival is a curated festival and some events for 2025 are already confirmed
- Final decisions on successful proposals are at the discretion of the festival team
- If your application is unsuccessful, feedback will be available only upon written request

Applications without the requested supporting documents will not be assessed. Late applications will not be assessed.

Successful Applications

If your proposal is accepted, Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival will:

- **Include the event in all official marketing materials** , including our website, social media channels, email newsletter and PR campaign
- **Market and publicise the event** as part of the Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival 2025 programme
 - Depending on the scale of the event proposed, marketing and PR activity will be discussed with programmed applicants and may require management by the applicant.
- **Facilitate box-office management** where the event / activity is ticketed.
 - Tickets can be sold or made available through the festival's ticketing system (online and by telephone) but we can also work with existing promoters/organisations to sell tickets via third-party box offices, linked to from our website
- **Provide public liability insurance.** Please note that Employer's Liability is the applicant's responsibility: insurance should be included in your detailed budget as part of your supporting documentation. There are some exceptions where the Festival will not be in a position to include the event in its Festival insurance policy including aerial work, this will be discussed with successful applicants. Please make provision for Employers and Public Liability insurance in your budget.
- **Work with applicants to determine a financial deal** which is mutually agreeable and appropriate.
 - Please indicate your proposed financial deal (Box Office Split / Guarantee versus Split / Fee based) with the festival in your proposal.
 - All agreed budgeted payments will be managed by festival producers Schweppe Curtis Nunn however any overspend beyond agreed budget will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Application & Selection Timeline

Applications Open

Applications for proposals open on **Friday 31 January**.

Applications Close

Applications for proposals close on **Monday 3 March at 6pm**. Late applications will not be accepted.

Interviews in Dublin / via Zoom

The Festival Co-Directors may want to meet you to discuss your proposal in detail. If so, you need to be available to meet with members of the assessment panel on **Tuesday 11 March** in Dublin. Please note that the Festival cannot cover travel expenses. If you are unable to travel to Dublin we can contact you via Zoom.

If you are selected for interview, we may request additional information in advance of our meeting.

Decisions

All applicants will be informed by **Friday 14 March** on whether or not their proposal has been successful.

Supporting Documents

All applications must have supporting documentation - applications received with no supporting documentation will not be assessed.

Supporting documentation, uploaded in the application form, must include:

1. A detailed budget on an excel worksheet / workbook for your proposal in the **BUDGET** section
2. Detailed CVs / biogs of the company / all people involved in the **ABOUT YOUR TEAM** section
3. You may also upload other supporting documents, including relevant images / images of previous productions/ links to videos of previous productions etc, however this is not essential in the **OTHER SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS** section
4. If you have agreement in principle from a venue for your event / activity please include a letter of support from the venue with the supporting documentation in the **ABOUT YOUR EVENT** section

Other Documentation We May Request

If your proposal is successful and involves working with children or young people you must be Garda Vetted and will be asked to provide a copy of your Child Protection Policy.

Uploading Documents

- Upload all supporting documents within the application form hosted on our website
- Supporting documents received via email can not be accepted

Late submissions of supporting documents will not be accepted.

Your application will be considered ineligible if all supporting documents have not been received within the application form by the application deadline.

Queries

If you have any queries about the application process, please get in touch with Maria Schweppe, Festival Co-Director, on maria@bramstokerfestival.com

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival is an initiative of Dublin City Council, produced and presented by Schweppe Curtis Nunn Ltd

Accessibility Requirements

Access Needs: If you have any access needs relating to the application please contact Festival Co-Director Maria on maria@bramstokerfestival.com

How To Apply

Read this How to Apply document in full!

Once you have read this document, please apply here:

<https://bramstokerfestival.com/en/page/open-call-2025/>

We cannot accept postal applications.

Dublin City Council Bram Stoker Festival



With all of that in mind, we'd love you to delve into not just *Dracula*, but the author, his era and the stories, customs, traditions and tales of his time. We want to hear new and unique interpretations of Stoker's life and legacy, told in fresh and rigorous ways, across a multitude of disciplines and artforms. Our four days and nights of deadly adventures await your input!

Read on to learn about previous productions at the festival, many of which came through the open call process.

Dublin City Council
Bram Stoker Festival



Previous Productions

Previous Festival Productions



The Haunting of Gusty Nook, written by Peter Dunne and directed by Ursula McGinn, was a hilarious new play for children that premiered at Axis Ballymun during the 2024 festival. Funded by the Arts Council of Ireland, the festival coordinated all marketing and PR activity for the show and worked with the producers to attract young audiences.



We were approached by Light House Cinema to be a presenting partner on an event in their largest screen - **Nosferatu with Live Score by Rita & Robbie Perry**. This sold out screening was accompanied by a score performed live. We are always happy to consider proposals and partnerships with venues, cinemas and all types of arts, cultural and event organisations who have Hallowe'en events in mind.

Previous Festival Productions



Who Did What Now? Podcast: The Victorians Ruined Everything - a 19th Century Guide to Mysticism and More was a live recording of the hugely popular podcast, hosted by Katie Charlwood, where the Victorian obsession with the supernatural was explained to a packed audience in the Graduate Memorial Building in Trinity College - Stoker's alma mater.



SCANRA: Samhain at the Cellar was an immersive, multi-disciplinary night of music, myth and storytelling celebrating the Irish origins of Samhain through the voices and mediums of modern creators. Featuring a lineup of female and non-binary artists, the night was a huge success and showcased artists responding to the themes of the supernatural, the macabre and the strange.

Previous Festival Productions



Slaughterhouse collaborated with **DJ Shampain** on a live-mixed score for the good vs evil classic, FW Murnau's **Faust** at the Pepper Canister Church. This event allowed Slaughterhouse to expand on their previous success presenting films in unique locations to their growing audience, and was a hit with audiences, with a second performance added to cater to demand.



We were thrilled to present **Dracula: Lucy's Passion** at the Abbey Theatre in 2024. Directed by Joan Sheehy, this staged reading explored chapters 5 through 16 of Dracula. This followed *Dracula: A Journey Into Darkness* which explored chapters 1-4 in the Abbey Theatre in 2023. Both shows sold out and were attracted a significant audience share of non-regular theatre attendees.

Previous Festival Productions



In collaboration with the National Gallery of Ireland and the Underthings, we presented **Warmbloods**, a darkly comedic tour of the gallery's Gothic works by two ladylike members of Dublin's vampire community, Anne and Winifred. Audiences were led astray by visions of exposed flesh, murder, darkened rooms, storms and a cruel-to-be-kind dissection of our 'warmblood' mortal nonsense and obsession with immortality.



Tours of all kinds are hugely popular at Bram Stoker Festival - from walking tours of the city with a particular focus to tours of buildings, galleries, institutions and more, our audience loves exploring the city and its links to Stoker. **Donal Fallon** has presented walking tours which encompassed many sites of particular relevance to Stoker's life, career and the Dublin of his time, in the city and last year, in Mount Jerome Cemetery.

Previous Festival Productions



Revenant was a visceral, frightening theatrical experience, marrying elements of horror and suspense with deliciously dark comedy in a reflection on the choices we make in pursuit of success. This play was submitted as part of last year's open call, and was a huge hit with our audience, with additional shows added to cater for demand. Staged in the Boys School at Smock Alley Theatre, the production is a perfect example of the type of work the festival is suitable for.



Monsieur Pompier's Travelling Freakshow presented **Nightmaresville** at the Sugar Club, a fever dream of mayhem and mischief for oddballs and ne'er do wells. This event came to us via last year's open call and was the perfect opportunity for this team to scale up on their previous outings with the support of the festival's team.

Previous Festival Productions



We presented the world premiere of new work by celebrated contemporary circus artists Loosysmokes, whose **Night of the Shifting Bog** was inspired by a passage in Stoker's *The Snake's Pass*. This outdoor work in St. Anne's Park, Clontarf (where Stoker once lived) wowed audiences with its mix of audacious circus skill and supernatural themes.



Irish composer Matthew Nolan worked with the internationally-renowned composer Andrea Mastrovito on the score for his work, **Nysferatu** - a rotoscope animation reimagining the Nosferatu story as if the character were a Syrian migrant in New York City. The screening and live-score event took place in the church where Stoker married Florence Balcombe. Bram Stoker Festival presented the Irish premiere of this incredible event.

Previous Festival Productions



In 2022, we presented Swiss artist Dan Acher's **BOREALIS** at Dublin Castle, where Stoker once worked. An immersive light and sound experience, it brought the fascination and superstition humans have experienced for millenia on viewing the Northern Lights right into the city centre for Dubliners and visitors of all ages to enjoy. More than 20,000 people snapped up tickets for this free experience within 24 hours!



We commissioned **Dreamgun** to point their satirical laser beam at Bram Stoker's titular 600-year-old demon man in a new Film Read based on the iconic novel and every vampire movie that it inspired. Audiences stepped across the threshold to a haunted pop-culture spook-fest comedy, written by Dreamgun and performed by actors and comedians who hadn't read the script beforehand but had seen Buffy.

Previous Festival Productions



Mother Stoker's Sickly Stories was a stunning, site-specific theatre production which transformed a crumbling Georgian mansion, bringing to life imagined stories Stoker might have been told by his mother as a sick child. The show ran a number of times per night, for the run of the festival and was limited to a small audience per session who were transfixed by its haunting visuals and macabre tales.



The festival was thrilled to present the world premiere of Colin Dunne's **Whitby**, which was performed in the evocative Boys School in Smock Alley. This dance-theatre piece went on to win Best Movement Direction at the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards. The audience was immersed in the story, which focused on Dracula's journey aboard the Demeter and was performed with masterful subtlety and malice by Dunne.

Previous Festival Productions



At **Sounds of Wood on Muscle** , some of Ireland's most inventive (and funniest) theatre makers took the 1938 Orson Welles radio play of Dracula and put an entirely modern spin on it... asking whether Dracula, radio plays, sound effects and even live audiences even matter anymore. Delivered with irreverent reverence, the show took place on the altar on which Stoker got married.



Some of Dublin's finest eateries created bespoke menus for those lucky enough to snag tickets for **Bite of Dublin** . A walking tour led by a leading historian, the event meandered through Dublin's streets over three hours, taking in spots of significance to Stoker, with indulgent treats along the way. This informative (and tasty!) experience focused on the lesser- known parts of his life - his fascinating family, inspirations, documented life experiences and insights into Victorian cuisine. 26

Previous Festival Productions



Broadcaster and podcasting veteran Liam Geraghty delved into pop culture's representation of Dracula in film, animation, puppetry, music and more in **FANGS**, a series of four podcasts released weekly in October in advance of the festival. The series featured guests such as Bram's great-grand nephew Dacre Stoker, Anne Marie Pace, author of *Vampirina Ballerina* and Norman Stillee, the creator of *Count Von Count* on *Sesame Street*.



Transforming the Victorian glasshouse in the Botanic Gardens, **Nightmare Plants** was a promenade theatre piece, which told a story of dark deception, poison and Victorian isolation. Limited to very few people at a time, the event ran every 30 minutes for 4 hours per night. Those who attending needed to steel their nerves for the resident creepy crawlies, who only came out as the lights dimmed...!

Previous Festival Productions



The reading room at the National Library was the venue for **Anatomy of a Critic**, a panel discussion featuring Nadine O'Regan, Peter Crawley and Patrick Freyne among others, which took a scalpel to the entrails of cultural criticism: from restaurants to theatre; television to visual art; and film to music, which took Stoker's life as a theatre critic as its starting point.



Eternal Night by **Maser** took place in a fully transformed empty retail/gallery space off Charlemont St. This walk-through visual art experience played with and subverted the visual themes and motifs familiar in Maser's work and was accompanied by a soundscape to enhance the low light and eeriness of the space.