



The Space Between - Call for new commissioned works

Push the Boat Out (PTBO), Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival is looking to support the creation of three new poetry-led performance pieces, responding to this year's festival theme *The Space Between*.

In association with the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS), PTBO will award three £1,500 commissions to Scotland-based artists or groups of artists working in poetry or a related art form, as well as supporting the lead artists with coaching. Each will produce a new piece to be performed on Sunday 15 November at Edinburgh's Pleasance as part of our 2026 festival (running 12 - 15 November 2026).

PTBO is an environment where all variations of poetry are encouraged to grow, evolve and collide with other vital art forms. The programme features a vibrant mix of poetry, spoken word, lyricism, music, performance, discussion and installations across our four-day festival. PTBO aspires to be a catalyst for new work and encourage work that challenges the boundaries of poetry and explores intersections with other art forms.

These commissions respond to feedback about a lack of opportunities to develop and platform longer poetry-led pieces, as well as the high value they have offered past recipients. Artists are asked to propose works of 15-20 minutes in length. These works should be 'in conversation' with another art form, and we actively encourage collaboration. Any artist living and working in Scotland in poetry or a related art form may apply. Submissions are welcome from artists working in any of Scotland's indigenous languages or BSL, and from people underrepresented in the literature sector.

If there is a close match with the theme, you may apply for support for works already in progress, but the first presentation should take place at the Festival and be able to be staged in the Pleasance Theatre.

PTBO encourages divergence, exploration and experimentation when responding to *The Space Between* both in terms of theme and form. We're using this theme to explore liminal and transitional spaces both physical and metaphorical: from borderlands to dream states to identities which defy categorisation. Environmentally, this theme will offer a lens to consider shorelines. Submissions should clearly outline how they see their relationship to the theme, however, we are happy to consider it as a point of broad inspiration. Artists are invited to form their ideas in a direction that feels in keeping with their practice and speaks to their current intentions for their work.

To further support the development of the work, NTS will offer bespoke support based on the needs of successful applicants which could include:

- Support and advice around technical aspects of lighting and sound
- A half day of input from their dramaturg and/or directorial feedback

- Access to props or costume from their store if required

New for 2026, to increase our support of artist development, Push the Boat Out will offer five sessions of coaching for up to two artists working on each project. This will be in partnership with [Coaching for Creatives](#). The coaching may focus on the development of the commission but could also be used to explore a different aspect of your work, as decided by each artist and their mentor. Each group will also be invited to attend a feedback session after the performance with representatives of PTBO and NTS.

It is our goal to offer space for one or two days of rehearsal time but this is TBC and will be confirmed at a later date. All successful commissions will have a full technical rehearsal at the Pleasance in the days leading up to the festival (between 11 and 13 November).

Details:

- Artists will be paid £1,500 for their commission including presentation of their work at PTBO Festival
- Additional bespoke support to develop the work will be provided by NTS
- Up to two lead artists per commission will receive an accompanying programme of coaching
- The work must be 15-20 minutes in duration when performed
- The piece must be poetry-led and in conversation with another art form
- Applications are welcome from artists living and working in Scotland
- Applications are welcomed for works in English, Scots, Doric, Gaelic and BSL
- Applications can be written or submitted via video
- The panel will consist of representatives from PTBO's programming committee and NTS

Timeline:

- Deadline for application: Monday 6 July
- Successful applicants contacted: w/c 21 July
- Initial conversations about support available from PTBO and NTS: August/September
- First meeting with coach: August/September
- Coaching sessions: between September and January, at a timeline agreed by each artist and mentor
- First draft / Interim report due: Tuesday 13 October
- Final technical requirements due: Friday 30 October
- Technical rehearsal: TBC 11 to 13 November at the Pleasance
- Performance: Sunday 15 November at the Pleasance

To apply please send:

- A proposal of max 1 page (written) or 5 minutes (video) detailing how you would intend to respond to the brief. This should clearly outline how you are responding to the theme and allow us to understand how the work would be presented on stage
- Up to 3 links to previous work
- CV for lead artist (max 2 pages) and short biographies for any identified collaborators
- A short paragraph explaining why you think you would particularly benefit from coaching at this stage
- A simple provisional budget outlining how you would spend the £1,500. Please detail any access

costs in addition, if applicable. You do not have to budget for travel and accommodation to attend the festival; reasonable travel and one night's accommodation if required for those outwith the central belt will be covered in addition to the £1,500.

- Complete our [Equalities Monitoring form](#)

Proposals should be sent to Annie Rutherford, Creative Producer, PTBO:

annie.rutherford@pushtheboatout.org, and should include the words “NTS application” in the subject line.

Questions or requests for informal discussions should be sent to Emma Collins, Director, PTBO:

emma.collins@pushtheboatout.org

Push the Boat Out is supported by Creative Scotland. These commissions are supported by the Garrick Charitable Trust

