



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: THE FUTURE OF LIFT

LIFT – The London International Festival of Theatre – is inviting expressions of interest from experienced partners or collectives, leaders or consortia, to enter discussions about its future model. We’re keen to hear from a broad range of applicants with bold ideas to reimagine the festival, drawing on LIFT’s 45-year history – from individuals keen to lead a new model to partners with proposals for collaboration.

Founded in 1981 by Rose Fenton and Lucy Neal to “challenge British theatre and open a window on the world,” LIFT has championed international theatre and performance through a biennial festival and off-festival programming. For over four decades, LIFT has pushed the boundaries of where, how, and with whom theatre takes place—creating dazzling, radical productions with international artists in unexpected places and amplifying lesser-heard global perspectives through intimate encounters. We believe deeply in the power of artists to reflect and reshape our world, especially in today’s fractured environment. Like many publicly funded arts organisations, LIFT is navigating a challenging funding landscape and a shifting cultural context, but now more than ever, we need bold, collective moments of international connection and revelation.

Since the last festival in 2024, LIFT has been led through a period of review and development by LIFT’s Board, Interim Artistic Director Amaya Jeyarajah Dent and Interim Executive Director Jo Gooding with the support of People Make It Work. Amaya and Jo have succeeded in consolidating LIFT’s financial position, laying the foundation for a bold, ambitious future. Informed by this work, LIFT is now embarking on a reimagining of its next chapter.

With the agreement of Arts Council England, the next edition of the festival will be deferred to 2027, allowing time for a meaningful transformation of LIFT’s model—building on its legacy while establishing a sustainable and compelling, ambitious vision for the future. The Board is seeking to engage in a process of curious, open, and exploratory conversation with potential leaders and partners about the festival’s future. These conversations, co-chaired by our advisers **Claire Doherty and David Micklem** with Board members and external advisers including **Jackie Wylie, Director, National Theatre Scotland, artist and Director of Forced Entertainment, Tim Etchells, and theatre director and Artistic Director of Actors Touring Company (ATC), Matthew Xia**, will explore new kinds of partnerships, leadership, artistic visions, programming structures, and the operational models that could support them. We are welcoming expressions of interest to eoi@liftfestival.com **by noon on 14th July** for conversations with selected prospective leaders/partners by the end of July. We look forward to hearing from you.

LIFT’s Board of Trustees

See the attached details of how to submit an expression of interest. If you would like a large print version of these details, please let us know and, if you have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact us at eoi@liftfestival.com.

BACKGROUND

LIFT has brought extraordinary theatrical experiences to the capital for the last 45 years. Boundary-pushing, experimental, multidisciplinary, innovative work has become LIFT's USP. Whether working site-specifically or across the celebrated stages of the city, LIFT has asked how international perspectives might connect with and transform our capital and worldview.

It is hard to adequately represent the complexity and sheer ambition of the programme over these past [four decades](#). LIFT has taken audiences from the heights of **Hofesh Shechter's *East Wall*** at the Tower of London, through the work of four London choreographers and 150 community performers, to the small hours of **Breckon and Randall's 24-hour *Second Woman* starring Ruth Wilson**; we been transported from lazing on the beach in the opera masterpiece of ***Sun and Sea* by Lina Lapelyte, Vaiva Grainytė, Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė** to the red-hot industrial heat of Bankside Power Station (now Tate Modern) through **Anne Bean and Paul Burwell's *Lift Off***. We have danced to the tune of our **Uplifters**, our Tottenham-based young people's programme, and been remade through the work of performance and theatre companies, thinkers and artists from **Clean Break** to **Back to Back Theatre**, **Belarus Free Theatre**, **Chiara Bersani**, **Faustin Linyekula** to **Forced Entertainment**, **Gayatri Spivak**, **Handspring**, **Keith Khan**, **Lola Arias**, **Royal Deluxe**, **Sonia Hughes**, **Taylor Mac**, **Welfare State International** to **William Yang**.

Following the 2024 festival, LIFT began a comprehensive process of evaluation. The organisation has been led during this period by an interim Executive team supported by the Board, who have undertaken a full strategic review and achieved a consolidated financial position. Now, in agreement with Arts Council England, the organisation is primed to begin a new chapter. We're looking to devise a boldly ambitious new vision, underpinned by an entrepreneurial and collaborative approach to deliver this significant international theatre festival.

We have decided to undertake a different kind of process than a conventional recruitment process—one rooted in shared inquiry and creative ambition. Our Executive Adviser, Claire Doherty, and theatre specialist, David Micklem, have helped us design a process that we hope will open up bold, new thinking, at a time when the arts and cultural sectors require a shift to more imaginative and sustainable models of operation.

SELECTION

We will longlist eight proposals from the EOIs with whom to explore initial ideas. From the longlist conversations, we anticipate identifying 2-3 potential partners and/or leaders with whom we will begin further discussions over the summer. In order to help us navigate the possibilities that arise, we have formed a panel of advisors to support us in these conversations. The panel is co-chaired by Claire Doherty and David Micklem and includes LIFT Board Members, and external advisers, Jackie Wylie, Director, National Theatre Scotland, artist and Director of Forced Entertainment, Tim Etchells, and theatre director, Matthew Xia.

WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We are interested in hearing from producing organisations, venues, consortia, individuals and collectives with experience in, and a commitment to producing ambitious, impactful international theatre and live performance. We recognise that an individual's proposition will be very different to that of an

organisation or consortia, but we are intentionally keeping an open mind about scale and approach, recognising that bold, radical new ideas emerge from unexpected places. We also appreciate new ideas need care and protection, therefore, we will focus our initial discussions on ideas for speculative strategic change based on previous experience, rather than requesting new artistic programming ideas at this stage.

It may be helpful to understand the values we would wish to see in a future partner, co-leader or collaborator.

- You believe that our capital city should be served by an exemplary biennial festival celebrating innovative international artistic work and you can evidence how you have achieved ground-breaking, ambitious work of scale in the past.
- You believe that theatre and contemporary performance can be a dynamic force for positive change.
- You understand the vital nature of amplifying lesser-heard global perspectives in the UK and are passionate about forging new connections between international artists and UK-based artists and audiences.
- You are curious and excited about testing new forms of theatre and performance, and unafraid of stepping outside conventional boundaries and forms.
- You believe we need to champion and build more inclusive, more sustainable, more representative and fairer ways of working that will transform traditional organisational structures.
- You are open to exploring smarter, more entrepreneurial, collaborative models of operation to underpin your artistic ambitions.

The range of future relationships with LIFT might include:

- Collaborative or collective leadership models
- Leading an ambitious artistic strategy through a bold new approach to business growth
- Co-producing or shared resource structures
- Consortia, mergers, or other innovative partnerships

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Your written expression of interest (maximum two A4 pages) should include:

- A brief introduction to you/your organisation, including values and relevant experience
- Why you are interested in shaping the future of LIFT at this moment
- An outline of the vision you have for the type of relationship or leadership model you'd like to explore with us along with a summary of the benefits or advantages to LIFT and you/your organisation (and your respective stakeholders, if relevant)
- Your capacity and availability (and that of your Board if applicable) to enter into a process of exploration over this summer

We welcome bold, fresh thinking. You are not expected to submit a detailed proposal at this stage; feel free to suggest several potential approaches. We recognise that time is tight, and we want to encourage you to think out loud with us. Should you be longlisted by the panel for further discussion, you will have the opportunity to further explore these ideas verbally with us.

Deadline: 12pm, Monday 14 July 2025

Submit to: eoiliftfestival.com

Please note: To ensure fairness, we will not be holding 1:1 calls during the open call period, but you can submit clarification questions by email to eoiliftfestival.com. You will be provided with access to a range of FAQs which will be regularly updated on a rolling basis until the deadline at 12pm 14th July.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A longlist of up to eight proposals will be selected by the panel according to the following criteria:

- **Fit:** Alignment of mission and values with LIFT
- **Approach:** Evidence of bold, innovative thinking about LIFT's future model, and compelling argument for the benefits/advantages of a future relationship
- **Experience and capacity:** Track record in commissioning and producing international theatre and/or performance work, international networks, evidence of astute business management and capacity to enter into a process of discussion at this time.

TIMELINE

18 June 2025

- Open call announced; clarification questions accepted via email; answers shared through the requested FAQ document.

14 July 2025

Deadline for expressions of interest. Longlist contacted.

w/c 21st July 2025

- First-stage conversations with the Selection Panel (online)
- Shortlist of partners/individuals will be identified

Late July/early August

- Second-stage conversations with Board and Executive Advisers (in-person)
- Recommendations made to the LIFT Board

Autumn 2025

- Announcement of outcomes and next steps for LIFT

CONFIDENTIALITY

We appreciate that whilst this process is open and exploratory, it will involve commercially sensitive negotiations. To this end, we will provide a two-way, non-disclosure agreement for all short-listed partners/individuals to ensure absolute confidentiality.