



Cre8 Theatre are pleased to announce the launch of Deaf Arts Festival NI at host venue, the MAC, Belfast, from 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Developed to connect with d/Deaf communities across Northern Ireland and beyond, the boundary breaking festival creates opportunity, access, and inclusion to arts activity for integrated audiences. As well as placing deaf artists in central roles on the main stage, the festival focuses on integrating deaf and hearing communities in diverse shared creative experiences.

The festival launches in its second year with a theatre piece of brand-new writing from Cre8 Theatre for young people and families, 'The Fisherman's Friend' an uplifting modern musical and immersive play, as well as the headline programming of stand-up storyteller/comedian, Edinburgh Festival award winner Rinkoo Barpaga.

Cre8 Theatre return to the Deaf Arts Festival NI, building on the success of their 2023 production '*Sleeping Beauty*'. '*The Fisherman's Friend*' is a new play devised by deaf and hearing artists, under the skilful eye of director and playwright Sarah Lyle. This production features music, puppetry, integrated captioning and BSL, and is for all the family, deaf and hearing together. Played in a relaxed environment, making it accessible to all audiences.

**Artistic Director (Cre8 Theatre) Sarah Lyle said,**

"It has been an amazing experience collaborating with the d/Deaf community over the last 2 years. We are uniquely progressing NI and the arts sector here, showcasing how to innovatively incorporate accessible strategies into creativity. We're inspiring people from the d/Deaf community here by creating a theatrical piece for all audiences that offers access, inclusion, and integration for the d/Deaf community, as well offering shared high-quality, equal arts access for deaf and hearing communities."

**Julie Stewart, Programming Officer at the MAC said,**

"After the success of last year's inaugural Deaf Arts Festival, we are thrilled and privileged to be yet again hosting such an exciting, inclusive, and beautiful project. The collaborative process embraced by Cre8 Theatre and d/Deaf and hearing artists really speaks to our vision. The team have worked really hard, and the festival has grown so much in its second year to include not just theatre, but also comedy, workshops and inclusive fun for all – we can't wait for Easter weekend for everyone, d/Deaf and hearing audiences alike, to enjoy everything that's going on!"

**Paula Clarke, artist, activist and performer said,**

“This project is such an important one. For deaf artists and performers, it can be difficult to break through into mainstream arts as our language and culture are different. Deaf artists being given lead roles in this project enables our community to showcase not only our wonderful language, culture, and stories but also how integrated theatre can be done in a way that welcomes and includes everyone. And this is our belief – everyone regardless of language, background and culture has a place within the arts and a right to enjoy theatre fully. This is about sending a message to the deaf community to remind them that they too can achieve their dreams, and to aim high. It’s also a way of showing the arts world the unique perspective and value that deaf artists can bring to any production.”

Building on the success of the inaugural Deaf Arts Festival NI which launched in the MAC, Belfast in May 2023, Cre8 Theatre have engaged partners once again and are delighted to launch The Deaf Arts Festival NI in its second year 2024. The festival has grown from 2 plays in 2023 to a spectacular and jaw dropping 20-event festival in only its second year.

There’s a jam-packed programme with something to appeal to everyone, young and old, deaf and hearing. Such as: A Street Art Workshop and Street Art Tour (Cathedral Quarter), led by deaf artist Martin Glover with a sign language interpreter, Cre8 Theatres family friendly production ‘The Fisherman’s Friend’, BSL workshops from Sign Source Learning, performing arts workshops for adults from the d/Deaf community, a Comedy Improv Jam performance from community and professional performers deaf and hearing together, and headline act stand-up comedian Rinkoo Barpaga brings his 1 person show, fresh from an award winning run at the Edinburgh Festival.

**DATES:** Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March – Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024  
**TIMES:** Various  
**VENUE:** The MAC, Belfast

The Deaf Arts NI Festival has been made possible by the kind support of the following funders:



Belfast  
City Council



HALIFAX FOUNDATION  
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CAR BROTHERS

Thanks also goes out to the festival's kind supporter and host venue, the MAC, Belfast.

Tickets to all events at the MAC are available now via [themaclive.com](https://themaclive.com)

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