

20 BELFAST MELA

22 - 30 AUGUST 2026

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Belfast City Council



Executive Office



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ArtsEkta would like to thank all funders and sponsors for supporting Belfast Mela 2026.

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Mela is brought alive by over 400 artists, performers, choreographers, producers, creative geniuses and event professionals. A massive thank you to each and every one for being the heartbeat of the festival.

Festival Team

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Creative Producer

Creative Engagement Manager

Development Manager

Event & Projects Officer

Admin & Operations Officer

Heritage Officer

Design & Marketing Officer

Production Manager

Press & Communications

Motion Design

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MELA DAY

30 AUGUST 2026

30 AUGUST 2026
BOTANIC GARDENS

WELCOME BACK TO MELA!

Today, Botanic Gardens becomes a global playground of music, dance, food and art, where cultures from around the world come together in one unforgettable celebration. From breathtaking performances and vibrant carnival energy to delicious international cuisine, family adventures and immersive cultural experiences, every corner of the park offers something new to discover. We invite you to wander, explore, connect and celebrate with us.



A Message from CEO of ArtsEkta, Dr. Nisha Tandon OBE

As we arrive at the final and most spectacular day of this year's Belfast Mela, we're delighted to welcome you to Botanic Gardens for a joyful celebration of culture, creativity, and community.

Mela Day is the beating heart of our festival - a vibrant showcase of global music, dance, food, and art, brought to life by artists, performers, and communities from near and far.

Today, we invite you to explore every corner of the park - taste the flavours of the world, dance to rhythms that span continents, discover new cultures, and take part in something truly special. Thank you for being part of this incredible journey. Let's end our big 20th birthday with joy, colour, and connection - together at Mela.



A Message from Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly

For two decades, Mela has brought communities together, celebrating the richness of our diverse cultures while creating opportunities for people of all backgrounds to connect, learn and celebrate together.

Belfast City Council is once again proud to support this landmark festival, which will bring colour, creativity and celebration to the city.

I'd like to thank ArtsEkta, and the many artists, volunteers, partners and community groups whose passion and dedication have made Belfast Mela such an enduring success over the past 20 years.



Green Mela aims to reduce the negative impact the festival has on the environment. We are committed to reducing pointless plastic, encourage recycling and contribute to regeneration of the city.



Handpicked Highlights for Mela

With six hours of world-class music, dance, food, culture and family fun, there's something exciting happening around every corner of Botanic Gardens. Here are just a few of our can't-miss moments to help you make the most of your Mela adventure.

12.30pm OPENING PROCESSION

Start your Mela journey with a spectacular carnival parade bursting with giant creations, colourful costumes, live percussion and dancers from around the world.

1.00pm THE TRAVELLING TRUNK

Travel the world through crafts, music, storytelling and hands-on activities as families explore cultures from across the globe.

1.25pm CHARRED CORN HUMMUS

Give classic hummus a smoky summer twist! Join Megan from Stereo Café in East Belfast as she demonstrates her delicious Charred Corn Hummus.

1.45pm WORLD OF WORDS

Settle beneath the canopy of the Palm House for an inspiring storytelling session, where tales from around the world transport audiences of all ages.

2.10pm NATURAL ELEMENTS TRIO

Celebrate the groundbreaking music of the legendary fusion group Shakti, whose pioneering sound seamlessly blended jazz, blues and South Indian Carnatic music.

2.30pm THE MEDINA

Step into the sights, sounds and flavours of Tunisia as you wander through the vibrant Medina. With artisan crafts, live music, delicious cuisine.

3.00pm SLI NA SÍ FAIRY TRAIL

Journey into the magical world of Irish mythology and meet legendary characters including the Morrigan, Lugh Lámfhada and Manannán Mac Lir on this enchanting family adventure.

3.15pm LITTLE ASIA

Experience the traditions of East Asia through colourful performances, hands-on workshops, martial arts, crafts and cultural demonstrations.

3.30pm BABA BOLLYWOOD

Dance, play and explore in this joyful sensory experience designed especially for babies, toddlers and young families.

4.30pm FEAST OF FIRE

Can you handle the heat? Cheer on brave contestants as they take on Belfast Mela's legendary Chilli Eating Challenge.

5.15pm FESTIVAL FINALE

Celebrate 20 years of Belfast Mela with an unforgettable closing performance, bringing together world music, dance and carnival spirit in one spectacular finale.



Move to the rhythm of the world with global beats, vibrant dance, and cultural fusion come alive in the heart of Botanic Gardens. As the centrepiece of Mela Day, this electrifying stage hosted by UTV's Paul Reilly and Carolyn Stewart, brings together international artists and local talent for a spectacular celebration of music and movement.



World Stage

12.10pm	The Rock Choir
12.45pm	Lord Mayor's Address
1.00pm	Con Eire & The Belfast Funk Foundation
1.40pm	Chinese Dance NI
2.15pm	Praana Dance
2.35pm	Leo Miyagee
3.05pm	Mexican Dance NI & Irish Entertainment Group
3.30pm	Manukahunney
4.10pm	Bhangra Smash Up
4.35pm	Dance United
4.50pm	South Asian Dance Academy
5.15pm	Bhangra Smash Up

Scan here for full artist information



Showcase Stage

12.45pm	Poca Productions
1.00pm	Glasgowbury Showcase
1.20pm	Estonian Dance
1.40pm	Polish Folk Initiative
2.10pm	The Natural Elements Trio
2.45pm	Dhol Belfast with Ulster Scots Music
3.05pm	Utropiks
3.40pm	Nouvelle Candence
4.20pm	Duo Zouk
4.45pm	Bright Lights
5.05pm	Bhangra Blasters
5.20pm	Magwere

Scan here for full artist information



Family Fun

A trip to the Mela isn't complete without diving into our exciting family attractions. From vibrant global arts and crafts and lively dance workshops to enchanting street theatre and captivating storytelling, there's something magical for every member of the family!



Culture Land

Experience a line up of crafts, sounds, dance, stories and art, giving your young ones a true cultural experience they will never forget.

- 1.10pm Amber Lithuanian Group
- 1.30pm Bhangra Blasters
- 2.00pm The Wilding
- 2.40pm The Rock Choir
- 3.10pm Slovak Dance NI
- 3.25pm Grupo So Pa Basi
- 3.40pm Praana Dance
- 4.00pm Dhol Belfast
- 4.45pm Chinese Dragon

Location: Ulster Museum Lawns

Don't forget to visit stands through Culture Land featuring Philpino United Support Organisation, Polish Sisterhood, Curious Drummers, Ukrainians in Northern Ireland, Art Route Collective and Corrymeela.

World of Words

Step into the enchanting surroundings of The Palm House and immerse yourself in a world of storytelling. Relax beneath the canopy of exotic plants and listen as tales from the four corners of the world unfold around you.

- 12.30pm Orla McKeating
- 1.30pm Masako Carey
- 2.30pm Vicky McFarland
- 3.30pm Sam Porceillio

Location: Palm House





Baby Bollywood

Led by Indian dancers and early years facilitators, immerse yourself in the vibrant sights and sounds of Bollywood inside a beautifully decorated marquee. With colourful fabrics, sparkling lights, and infectious rhythms, both adults and children can enjoy dancing to a joyful Bollywood soundtrack—guaranteed to get little feet moving and tiny hands twirling in their babygros.

Drop in from 12.30 - 5pm

Location: Bandstand

Little Asia

Immerse yourself in the rich beauty of Far Eastern culture at Mela's vibrant Little Asia presented in partnership with the Chinese Welfare Association and Japanese Society of Northern Ireland, set against the stunning backdrop of the park's Rose Garden.

- Calligraphy Workshop
- Chinese Lion & Dance Dragon
- Kendo martial arts workshop
- Ikebana flower arranging workshop
- Yukata Kimono dress up
- Bon odori dance workshop
- Yo-yo festival games
- Bonsai display

Drop in from 12-5pm

Location: Rose Garden



Slí na Sí – Fairy Trail

Step into the otherworld – the world of the fairies or ‘na daoine maithe’ on this magical fairy trail experience where you will meet the Tuatha Dé Danann; the magical and mythical fairy people of Ireland.

Show times are 1pm, 2pm & 3pm

Location: The Rockery



The Medina

Step into The Medina – a vibrant, atmospheric space inspired by markets of North Africa where cultures, creativity and community come together.

All day	Dar el Ibaa – Mosaic Workshop by ArtsEkta
All day	Souk El Fen – Painting Demonstration from Expressions Art ASBL
1.00pm	Harissa Making Demonstration by Carthago Restaurant
2.00pm	Markouth Making Demonstration by Carthago Restaurant
3.00pm	Tunisian Tea Ceremony by Carthago Restaurant

Don't forget to enjoy the sounds of traditional Tunisian music from Nouvelle Candence throughout the day.

Location: Bandstand



The Travelling Trunk

Join our travelling storyteller on an interactive adventure as they guide families through winding pathways, unlocking stories from around the world inspired by the cultures celebrated at Belfast Mela. Along the way, children will solve clues, uncover hidden treasures, meet colourful characters and become part of the story themselves.

Show times are 1pm, 2pm, 3pm & 4pm

Location: Rose Garden

Mela Bazaar

Discover a vibrant world of sights, scents, and sounds as a diverse range of exhibitors transform the park into a spellbinding global marketplace. From tantalising food stalls and artisan treasures to handcrafted goods and wellbeing experiences, Mela offers a shopper's paradise right in the heart of the city. Be sure to stop by our Henna marquee for a beautiful Mela-inspired tattoo to mark the occasion

Drop in from 12-6pm

Location: Across the Park





Set within the beautiful Rose Garden, World of Wellbeing offers a welcoming space where visitors can enjoy a quieter pace within the festival. Bringing together sound, gentle movement, community wellbeing and opportunities to pause, the Rose Garden becomes somewhere to slow down, recharge and reconnect throughout the day.



Wellbeing Experiences

All day	The Sound Space
All day	The Sound Hub
All day	Meditation & Massage
1.30 & 2.00pm	Qi Gong
2.30 & 3.00pm	Mindful Hoops

Don't forget to check out The Nauroso Sensory Garden at the Tropical Ravine in the park for a self-guided exploration of sound, sensory environments.

HappyFest Talks

1pm	Fergus Rooney: The Power of Mindset & The Subconscious Mind
1.45pm	Annette Burke: EFT Tapping & Family Constellations
2.15pm	Tove Kane: Laughter Yoga
3.15pm	Ciara Daly: Overcoming Our Fears to Live a Happier & Healthier Life
4.00pm	Jeanne Sullivan-Bileci: How to Attract a Partner, Not a Project
4.45pm	Deirdre Maguire: The Stress Solution System

Location: Rose Gardens

Don't forget to meet local organisations, community groups and wellbeing partners supporting individuals, families and communities across Belfast and beyond. Drop in throughout the day to chat, discover local services and find out more about the projects and initiatives helping communities to thrive.



With over 30 local food producers, get ready to treat your taste buds to a world of flavour – where global cuisine meets the finest Northern Irish ingredients. Explore our World Food Village, roll up your sleeves at live cookery demos, and turn up the heat with the fiery return of the Mela Chilli Eating Competition!



Taste the World

Visit our cookery theatre where local chefs and producers come together to share recipes while describing their local food inspirations and influences in developing world inspired menus.

- 12:30pm A Middle Eastern Feast with DarMisk Grill
- 1:25pm Hummus Making with Stereo Café
- 2:20pm Seafood Cooking with Gerard Skelly
- 3:15pm North African Cuisine with Nomad17

Location: Bandstand



Feast of Fire

Step up for Mela's legendary Chilli Eating Competition – the ultimate test of taste buds and bravery. Watch as fearless contestants battle it out round by round, each pepper hotter than the last. It's fiery, fun, and not for the faint-hearted. Whether you're competing or just cheering from the sidelines, this is one spectacle that's guaranteed to bring the heat!

4.30pm – 5.30pm at the Taste the World Marquee





Aristan Market

Discover the best of Northern Ireland's food scene in this vibrant new space celebrating local flavour and heritage. From homegrown produce and artisan creations to inventive street food, everything here is brewed, baked, cooked, or crafted with heart – fresh, local, and full of soul.

Location: Bandstand



Food Courtyard

Take a break in our Food Courtyard, nestled within the World Food Village – the perfect spot to relax and savour a bite with family and friends. Soak up the atmosphere with live traditional music sessions, curated by renowned local musician Gráinne Holland in our dedicated music marquee.

Location: East Walkway





CULTURAL BONDING THROUGH THE ARTS



DO YOU WANT TO JOIN THE TEAM BEHIND BELFAST MELA?

We are looking for enthusiasts to be a part of our growing team.
Interested?

Contact admin@artsekta.org.uk or scan the QR code



ArtsEkta are proud organisers of the Belfast Mela

www.artsekta.org.uk



Belfast
City Council





Mela will return in 2027
between the 21- 29 August!
Keep up the latest festival
news at
www.belfastmela.org.uk



We would love to see your photos and videos
from Mela Day! If you are posting online
don't forget to tag our social media accounts.

Use #BelfastMela to help us create memories for the Belfast Mela 2026.

Want to attend future events?

We run events throughout the year, many of which are free to attend and take part in. Sign up to our mailing list at www.artsektal.org.uk to keep updated with our latest news and events.

FESTIVAL MAP

	Food Area
	First Aid
	Public Toilets
	Breast Feeding /
	Baby Changing
	Access points

