



Common Rooms Writers' Residency at Trades Hall

Supported by the Malcom Robertson Foundation and Melbourne Fringe

What is the Common Rooms Writers' Residency?

With the support of the Malcolm Robertson Foundation and Melbourne Fringe, Common Rooms will commission an emerging writer to write a new play in a paid residency at Trades Hall. The writer will be supported to create the new work, with the aim of it being produced at the Melbourne Fringe Festival 2020.

What kind of play will be commissioned?

We are commissioning a play which will be programmed at the Fringe Hub, so it should be made specifically to fit one of our ten on-site venues. The commission is for a playwright – which means there should be text at the heart of the work – and it should eventually be a complete work of 50-60 minutes in length and be designed to bump-in and bump-out in under 15 minutes. It might sound limiting, but trust us, by building this format into the structure of the work, you're creating an immediate in-built touring network of similar Fringe spaces which can be accessed through Melbourne Fringe's touring partnerships with Adelaide, Perth, Sydney, New Zealand and Edinburgh Fringe Festivals. This commission aims to create a work of high calibre with simple production demands, putting the focus squarely on the text (and performances of course) in the final work.

To get an understanding of the venues, you're welcome to check out our 2019 Fringe Hub Tech Specs and Hub Info Pack via the below links.

[2019 Fringe Hub Tech Specs](#)

[Hub Info Pack](#)

Conceptually, the play should respond to the context, content, history, philosophy or physical site of Trades Hall. This might include works which thematically respond to the notions of rebellion, protest, solidarity, the common

good, the individual vs the collective, employment and labour or rebalancing power structures, and works might directly, indirectly or conceptually reference the site in their development.

What's on offer?

With a focus on the play writing process, the selected writer will receive:

- A commissioning fee of \$15,000 in cold hard cash, for an emerging writer to be writer in residence at Trades Hall during 2020 in the lead-up to the Melbourne Fringe Festival.
- A venue for a rehearsed reading of the work part-way through the process.
- Entry into Melbourne Fringe's mentorship program, providing a paid artistic mentor who will support the development and dramaturgy of the work.
- Producing support from Melbourne Fringe as you create the work.
- A free Festival event registration for a public season during the 2020 Melbourne Fringe (1-18 October 2020), including a season programmed in the Fringe Hub.

What do we mean by an emerging writer?

We define an emerging writer as someone who has practised as a professional artist continually for less than five years.

We're happy to accept your self-definition as an emerging artist, there's no age restrictions and specifications, but let's just say if you've had your play produced on the mainstage by MTC or Malthouse then you're probably not emerging.

It's open to any Australian citizen or resident but the residency must take place in Melbourne in person at Trades Hall between April and September 2020.





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How will the residency work?

You will have access to a shared space with a desk and chair and internet as a workspace during office hours in the months April to September 2020. You're also welcome to work in other spaces at Trades Hall subject to availability.

You will have access to the Old Ballroom at Common Rooms for five days of rehearsals during the day (Mon to Fri) in the lead-up to your work-in-progress reading, and a free event with basic technical setup for a public work-in-progress reading event.

You may also have access to the Annexe at Common Rooms for additional rehearsals by negotiation subject to availability.

You will be responsible for producing the work-in-progress reading, as well as a performance season during the Fringe Festival season, and you are responsible for meeting any costs as part of this process.

You will be able to work with your mentor and the Melbourne Fringe team to create a detailed project plan for the work, including identifying funding opportunities that can support the presentation and finding creatives (including performers, directors, dramaturgs and technical personnel) to realise the work.

Selection Process

You will be required to submit an Expression of Interest outlining your past work and your vision for the residency project or process, and finalists will be selected for an interview with an industry panel consisting of a playwright, a theatre director/dramaturg alongside Melbourne Fringe's Creative Director.

Selection Criteria

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate:

- Previous experience as a writer with an emergent body of work
- A clearly thought-through rationale for your residency, including a creative response to the rich nuances of Trades Hall history anywhere in time – from the traditional owners, pre-Colonial occupation, right up to the present
- An innovative idea for a new or substantially new work to be developed
- A clear understanding of form and genre for the work

Timeline

10am AEST, 11 November 2019:

Expressions of interest close

December 2019:

Interviews with short list, resident confirmed

February – September 2020:

Playwright Residency begins

June/July 2020:

Work in Progress reading

1-18 October 2020:

Performance season at Melbourne Fringe Festival

Trades Hall History

Victorian Trades Hall is the headquarters of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, which helps organise activities and campaigns (including lobbying State parliament, coordinating campaigns on social issues and organising rallies, marches and protests). It is not only the birthplace of organised labour in Australia, but also of Victorian Labor and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. It is the world's oldest trade union building and its heritage value has been recognised by its inclusion on the Register of the National Trust and the Historic Buildings Register.

Embodied in the site is a rich history of craft and craftsmanship, of working for the common good, providing amplification for the voices of the people. There is also a folkloric history of darkness in the building with tales abounding of illegal and immoral activity occurring over the years.

Arts and culture has long been a part of the venue's operations. Musical and literary events raised funds for the first stage of the Trades Hall building in 1873 so the Hall was literally built on the arts. The venue has housed new works by Melbourne Workers Theatre, Christos Tsiolkas, The Torch and was the birthplace of Keating: The Musical.

The building remains a living trades hall – the home of the Trades Union movement – and as a site of resistance, and protest. This provides a rich opportunity for playwriting inspiration – regardless of any writer's individual political viewpoint – this is a building of complex history and living heritage.

For more information, or to request access to any part of the process in a more accessible format, please contact Simon Abrahams on (03) 9660 9600.

Proudly supported by the
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MAUREEN WHEELER AO
AND TONY WHEELER AO

