

Callout for Playwrights – Winter Term 2024

Strange Town offers opportunities in the performing arts to young people aged 5 to 25 in Edinburgh.

As a company, our aim at Strange Town is to enable young people to fulfil their creative potential. Whatever your background or experience, we believe everyone has creative and artistic abilities. We help young people to recognise and develop these abilities through peer and professional encouragement, participation, and example.

We are looking to commission up to **3** early-career playwrights (ideally Edinburgh-based or within a commutable distance) to write short plays to be performed by our youth theatre groups.

These plays will be performed by our **8-10s** and two **11-14s** classes. Each class contains 20 members, and the plays would need to have at least one part for all of them.

For the 8-10s, we are looking for plays of between **30-45** minutes.
For our 11-14s, we are looking for plays between **30-60** minutes long.
Each would be shown for **2** performances in **December 2024** at the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

We vastly prefer our young people to play parts written for their age (e.g 11–14-year-olds playing characters suitable for those aged 11-14) rather than pretending to be adult humans.

There is some leeway here: panto scripts with characters like a King and Queen are fine. Likewise, scripts with non-human characters are also acceptable. For example, an 11–14-year-old playing a multi-headed alien is completely fine for us and actually more acceptable than an adult human!

For our **December 2024** plays, we would like our writers to base their ideas around the theme of **The Night Before**.

We are particularly interested in ideas that are relevant to our young members today and which excite them, allowing them a sense of escape from their everyday lives.

We are also keen to see ideas that have **clearly considered the age group they are applying for**. Writing for 8-10s and writing for 11-14s are two vastly different prospects.

Playwrights must be available for the following dates in-person in Edinburgh:

- 1 readthrough & feedback session for a draft of your script on **Wed 12th or Fri 14th June 2024**
- 1 readthrough & feedback session for a draft of your script in **Wed 11th or Fri 13th September 2024**

We would also highly recommend each playwright attend a performance of their group presenting their summer show between **7-9th June**, for which a free ticket will be provided.

Each playwright will be paid **£500** for their writing. **This is not a fully professional rate, and we are well aware of this.** As a small charity, our resources are limited and unfortunately do not allow us to pay what we would like to. However, we are currently committed to a process of increasing our fee year-by-year to bring it more into line with the accepted standard.

We also endeavour to help develop our writers fully and provide every assistance possible, particularly for those for whom this may be the first time they have ever been paid for their writing. This includes one-to-one dramaturgy sessions, opportunities to interact and devise with your group members, and a lot of flexibility to fit our schedule around your existing work.

We hope that by working with us, we can be the first step that helps writers go on to lead fully professional writing careers.

Finally, in a world of constant research & development cycles, we do offer the chance to see your work actually make it to the stage!

Check out some comments from writers who have written with us before:

"I've had a brilliant time. It's developed my practice as a writer, challenged me to work in new ways, and I absolutely can't wait to see the play on stage. I'm going to be insufferably proud!"

"It's been a pleasure!"

"I appreciated the clarity with which we spoke about fees, the flexibility to give a slight uplift to cover travel costs, and the sensitivity the company showed to the fact that I had to have other work on at the same time."

"The feedback was really useful, and necessary, and it ultimately contributed to my own development, so I am really grateful for the in-person sessions."

For more information about this (e.g clarification on fees) or anything else you'd like to know before applying, please don't hesitate to get in touch using the details below.

If you are interested, please send us the following things:

- A short pitch (no more than 1 page) for a play for either the 8-10s or 11-14s. **Please specify which age group your pitch is for.** You can send multiple pitches if you wish.
- A writing sample of a **stage play** between 5-10 pages in length. Whilst we accept samples written for all audiences, we **strongly** recommend your sample demonstrates your ability to write for your chosen age group as **young performers**. The sample does not have to be a finished play or have had a previous performance of any kind. It could even be a newly written sample of one of your pitches.
- A short bio/CV detailing your writing experience to date (no more than 2 pages)

Please send these to James at james@strangetown.org.uk by no later than **10am on Monday 11th March 2024**.

Interviews requests will be sent out to successful applicants for the week commencing **Monday 18th March 2024**, which will be either online or in-person.

We strive to provide our young members with a variety of scripts and **avoid repetition**. Here is a brief description of recent commissions for these groups:

FRIDAY 8-10s

Dec 22: *Dungeons & Flagons* – a fantasy comedy about two storytellers trying to rewrite the story of grumpy King calling off the Midwinter Fair

Jun 23: *Lola Is Alone (And She Likes It)* – a family adventure about a fox refusing outside help to reconstruct her destroyed home

Dec 23: *Billi & The Polar Bear* – a winter tale about a grumpy polar bear and a mysterious old festival called *Chris-T-Mas*.

Jun 24: *Monster Force! Engage!* – a Pratchett-esque adventure to combat the monsters hiding under your bed.

WEDNESDAY 11-14s

Dec 22: *A Christmas Michael* – a farcical Nativity-gone-wrong where the teachers have left the kids in charge with an inexplicable George Michael theme.

Jun 23: *Wild Tides of Clíodhna* – a murder mystery drama set on a Scottish island about sea monsters and pollution.

Dec 23: *Tar-like* – a gothic, sci-fi adventure to escape across the asteroid belt exploring the ideas of family and home.

Jun 24: *Hacksilver* - a medieval play about a group of children creating their own Crusade to solve the world's problems.

FRIDAY 11-14s

Dec 22: *Needles* - a Christmas horror play about the tormented ghosts of a village from a dark Christmas long ago.

Jun 23: *I Was Here* - a historical drama about the sinking of an evacuee boat during WW2 and the discovery of its wreck by a modern group exploring a beach.

Dec 23: *Last Christmas* - a farcical sci-fi comedy celebrating the last ever Christmas in a spaceship escaping Earth.

Jun 24: *Burn the Little Witches* – a school drama in the style of *The Crucible*, with students hunting amongst themselves for the ones secretly switching schools and who are thus responsible for their own school's closure.