

**BRISTOL
OLD VIC**

FIVE YEAR COMMITMENT

2025 - 2030

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The South West and the rest of the UK continue to produce amazing writers whose work can be seen on stages and screens all over the country; however, there are challenges when it comes to consistent and long-term commitment in a landscape where often writers are working to the short-term and from job to job; we want to use the resource that we have to give focused opportunities for writers to build their craft and their voice over time and within the holding of a singular place.

Inspired by the long-term commitments made by residencies in theatres such as Signature Theatre in New York and thanks to the incredibly generous support of John Studzinski and the Genesis Foundation Prize, we are able to kickstart our Five Year Commitment.

Bristol Old Vic will commit to residencies for three writers at three different levels of experience for a period of five years, starting in January 2025. Over this time, we'll use our resources and expertise to allow these writers the time and space to develop and present new work. Additional to that, we'll use our resources to support the space between those commissions, connecting the writers with each other and ensuring they feel embedded and at home in our theatre.

We feel this sort of long-term commitment and support is needed at all stages of a writer's career and so we are committing to supporting three writers at different moments; one Early Career Writer, one Mid Career Writer and one Legacy Writer.

Announcing our Legacy Writer

We have curated the selection of our Legacy Writer in order to amplify the work of an artist who is a celebrated, published and produced contemporary modern dramatist and somebody whose influence and talent we at Bristol Old Vic want to particularly honour in this moment. Our Legacy Writer is somebody whose work we believe should

be firmly enshrined in the canon of British playwriting excellence. We are delighted to be able to say that **Winsome Pinnock** has accepted our offer to become our Legacy Writer and will be working with us across the next five years.

Winsome is an award-winning writer for stage, radio, film and television, described as “the godmother of Black British writing” (Guardian, 2003). Her work has been produced on the British stage and internationally since 1985. She was the first black British female writer to have a play produced by the Royal National Theatre. Her phenomenal body of work includes *Leave Taking* (Bush Theatre, Liverpool Playhouse, National Theatre), *Rockets and Blue Lights* (National Theatre, Manchester Royal Exchange & BBC Radio3), *Talking in Tongues* (Royal Court), *Mules* (Royal Court and Internationally) and many more.

It is an honour to join this groundbreaking initiative at a time when the landscape for new writing is particularly complex. Bristol Old Vic's commitment to investing in writers over a five-year period is both inspiring and necessary, recognising that the creation of new plays requires time, trust, and nurturance. I look forward to having the space to explore and develop my work within such a supportive community and to contribute to the theatre's legacy of innovation and storytelling. **Winsome Pinnock, Five Year Commitment Legacy Writer**

It is a deep joy to welcome Winsome as our inaugural Legacy Writer and we are delighted to be able to say that she has accepted our offer and will be collaborating with us across the next five years. From our first meeting Winsome has brought generosity, warmth and deep thinking around the potential of this long term support; we can't wait to see what we create together. **Nancy Medina, Artistic Director**

Winsome joins us as we begin an **open process to find our Early and Mid Career Writers**. If you're reading this guidance it probably means you're interested in finding out more about how you can express your interest in that opportunity. All three writers will be confirmed by December 2024 ready to begin the residency in January 2025.

Practically, how will the residency work?

The current proposed structure of the offer to each writer over all five years is as follows:

- We will commission the Legacy Writer to write one new play and produce one revival of an existing play within their repertoire across the residency.
- We will commission the Mid & Early Career Writers to write two new plays across the residency.
- All three writers will be supported to go on an annual week-long residential together, facilitated by the BOV Literary team, with space created to think together and consider some of the bigger questions around their work and practice.
- All three writers will have access to a small yearly budget separate to any commissioning support. The writers will have the agency to decide how to apportion this budget, but it can be used for anything from r&d experiments to

research aims or training opportunities. We will support them to think about how this budget can be spent but ultimately it will be up to them.

- The Early and Mid Career Writers will also be awarded a small monthly financial stipend of £300 p/month across all five years. This is in recognition of the instability and inconsistency of writing work, particularly at early and mid-career points, and aims to give these two writers a guaranteed small income floor that can support their time to practice and write outside of the specific parameters of a commission.
- All writers will be offered space and time to base themselves and their work within our building, engaging with Bristol Old Vic's programme and to be as much a part of the working life of the organisation as they want to be. We would like them to consider the building as their writing home throughout all five years. This offer will be responsive and bespoke to the wants and needs of each individual writer.

An important note on the commissioning. We know that writers need to have their work produced and that this is a crucial part of every writer's development. Every commission that a writer receives within the Five Year Commitment will be made with the intent that we will make *absolute best efforts to produce that new work on one of our stages as soon as it is ready for production*. We can't see into the future, and we haven't guaranteed production alongside commission as we don't know the journey each commission will take us on, but it's important that we state that *this intent is a crucial part of the Five Year Commitment offer*. All new commissions will be contracted separately to our Five Year Commitment agreement with the writer and under the structure and terms of our Writers Guild of Great Britain/UK Theatre Agreements at point of commission.

This is the plan as we imagine it right now, but we see this commitment as a living, breathing thing. We have chosen to commit to writers over five years because we also want to stay open to the idea that with such a long-term commitment, the plan as written above may change dependent on who those writers are. We will always want to make this a flexible and malleable residency that has room to shift its focus depending on where each of our artists take us. We're excited to see where things go.

Who can apply?

This opportunity is open to writers from across the UK – however we would ask that you consider the following before applying:

It's important that our selected writers are able to reciprocate this commitment.

We would like both writers to be able to make a strong connection with our theatre, housed in the centre of Bristol, across all five years of this residency. Therefore, we strongly encourage expressions of interest from writers based in or from the South West and those who consider Bristol Old Vic their 'local theatre'. Writers not currently based near the theatre are very welcome to complete an expression of interest; we would love to hear from you, but you should consider and articulate how you plan to be able to commit to spending time in Bristol over the coming years when expressing your interest.

This residency aims to reach those who may not previously have had the opportunity to have their artistic practice held or supported over multiple years.

We believe that means this opportunity will likely be most suited to individuals whose voices have been historically underrepresented and marginalised on our stages. Before expressing an interest, we'd ask you to consider whether you have encountered significant barriers to your chosen career path because of inequity or prejudice.

Identity and experience is complex; everyone is welcome to apply for this opportunity. Inclusively, we want to encourage all applicants to investigate and interrogate the role privilege, or lack of, may have played in their journey before committing the time and energy to an Expression of Interest.

Anyone aged 18+ is eligible to participate & there is no upper age limit on this opportunity

How do I know if I am 'early career' or 'mid career'?

We recognise that you might be unsure whether you qualify as an 'early career' or 'mid career' writer & that these terms can be subjective, so to offer a bit of guidance around who Bristol Old Vic would like to reach with each writer opportunity, you should consider the following.

We think our **Early Career Writer** is probably somebody who:

- Is within the early years of their professional career as writer.
- Has written and staged at least one full-length play; this doesn't need to have been a long run, and it could have been within a festival or fringe context.
- Feels like they've got the foundations of their practice down and that they've got a developing sense and understanding of playwriting craft and their own writing voice; that could have been gained by lots of practice, graft and experience or through formal artist development programmes/higher education opportunities.
- Feels ready to take the next step in their writing journey; maybe they are working towards their first full commission or maybe they've already got one or two and are looking to build on those, but they should feel like the natural next step is having their work professionally produced in spaces like the theatres at Bristol Old Vic, and they probably haven't yet had the opportunity to do that.

We think our **Mid Career Writer** is probably somebody who:

- Has been doing some professional work as a credited writer for more than five years.
- Has had at least one fully staged professional production of their work produced by a theatre across the UK, which will probably have run for more than a week.
- Has written more than three plays, even if some haven't yet been staged. They will probably feel like they know their craft well and are more in need of production and development opportunities than writer development programmes. They have probably had one or two commissions and some opportunities to practice in a development and rehearsal context and feel

capable of writing big, ambitious plays, but they might not have had the opportunity to do that yet.

- Feels ready to take the next step in their writing journey; they probably feel somewhere towards the end of the first phase of their career or have hit a roadblock trying to grow their practice or move beyond smaller scale produced work.
- Can point to a few key successes and professional ‘milestones’ that they’ve hit along their path so far, but they should feel like the natural next step is having their work professionally produced on some of the country’s bigger stages.

Both writers will feel a strong affinity with the work that we develop and produce at Bristol Old Vic, and will be keen to build an enthusiastic & artistically invigorating collaboration and working relationship with our team over the next five years.

Eligibility is always subjective and more nuanced than guidance can articulate. We want to hear from as many people as we can possibly reach with this opportunity so if you are wondering or questioning whether you are eligible, please reach out to us before applying and feel free to ask us for some support to work that out.

How do I apply?

If you have read the guidance above and feel like this opportunity is for you, please complete a short Expression of Interest to let us know using the details below.

After the Expression of Interest phase has closed, we will then be in touch to let everyone know whether we are able to progress their EOI to the next phase of the selection process, which will involve scheduling an introductory meeting with the BOV Artistic & Literary team and a commitment to read a full-length piece of writing.

Whilst we are unable to commit to individual feedback for all unsuccessful EOIs; anyone committing their time to this process will be offered some general feedback which reflects how we made our decisions and particular qualities that resonated within successful EOIs.

Key dates:

- Expressions of Interest open: Thursday 26 September, 2024
- Deadline for Expressions of Interest: 5pm, Friday 25 October 2024
- All applicants notified of outcome by Thursday 7 November, 2024
- Programme takes place: January 2025 – January 2030

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST GUIDANCE

What will be asked on the expression of interest form?

The Five Year Commitment form asks the following questions:

- **Your name**
- **Your contact details**
- **Whether you are applying as an Early or Mid Career Writer**
- **To share a short biography that tells us a bit about you (max 200 words)**
- **To tell us why this opportunity specifically feels like it is right for you and your practice at this point in time (max 200 words)**
- **We will also ask you to share a sample of your writing (max 10 pages).**
This writing sample does not need to be related to the play idea you shared with us earlier in the form, it can be anything you like. The only thing we ask is that it should be intentionally written for stage

You will be given the option to submit written answers or recorded answers

For written submissions, we strongly suggest preparing your answers in advance and then copying and pasting them into the form when you are ready.

EOIs are submitted online via Typeform

If you need to apply in a different format or if you require any additional support, please email Ben (ben.atterbury@bristololdvic.org.uk)

Here is the link to the online expression of interest form:

[Five Year Commitment Expression of Interest](#)

The deadline for submissions: 5pm on Friday 25 October 2024

When will I hear back about my Expression of Interest?

We will aim to respond to everyone on or before Thursday 7 November 2024