

DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEASY 2027 PRESENTATION PROGRAM APPLICATION GUIDELINES



**Darebin
Arts**

**DAREBIN
ARTS
SPEAKEASY**

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Front cover Image: *THE BLOK!* by A Daylight Connection (2025), image by Jacinta Keefe.

DAREBIN CITY COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGES THE WURRUNDJERI-WOI WURRUNG PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF LAND IN WHICH DAREBIN STANDS. WE RECOGNISE THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATERS AND CULTURE. WE PAY OUR RESPECT TO ELDERS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS.

ABOUT DAREBIN ARTS SPEAKEASY

Darebin Arts Speakeasy is Darebin City Council's award-winning year-round independent performance and development program. Since 2013, the program has curated and invested in contemporary dance, circus, theatre and multi-disciplinary artists whose works offer audiences a dynamic and diverse mix of stories that matter to the community, celebrate cultural diversity and reflect the times we're living in.

Darebin Arts has backed many of the groundbreaking artists and companies that make Melbourne's art sector so iconic.



Images: (L to R) *Arterial* by Na Djinang Circus (2023), image by Darren Gill; *The Fence* by Fleur Murphy (2023), image by Parenthesis; Bloomshed's *Pride & Prejudice* (2025), image by Sarah Walker.

APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

The Presentation program partners with independent artists and companies to produce new work for audiences across our venues: the [Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre](#) and the [Darebin Arts Centre](#).

This is a multi-artform program, spanning theatre, dance, circus, live art, and work that sits across and between those categories. The program is not guided by theme but looks to artists for their ability to make innovative, entertaining and engaging live performances that speak to the questions of our time.

Works are selected by application for their creative merit, viability for presentation, and potential impact for audiences, the art form, and the Darebin community.

We value work that can demonstrate an empathy with our programming priorities, which include:

- Original and compelling contributions to a cultural conversation
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led work
- Diverse local voices
- Addressing the climate emergency
- Access for all

Through the support of an independent curatorial panel, the program champions artists who push these conversations forward and show us something new.

All artists and companies are encouraged to apply. You do not have to be a Darebin resident, but a demonstrated connection to Darebin is highly desirable.

ABOUT THE VENUES

There are three theatre spaces available for Speakeasy productions in 2027 – Northcote Town Hall's [Main Hall](#) and [Studio One](#), and the Darebin Arts Centre's [Main Theatre](#). Read over the venue description and tech specs, and choose the venue that is right for your project. You're welcome to select multiple venues, or reach out to discuss options with our Programming Team.



NORTHCOTE TOWN HALL ARTS CENTRE

This iconic performing arts centre sits amid a busy strip of shops, bars, restaurants and music venues on High Street, Northcote. The building comprises the original 19th Century municipal building designed in the European neo-classical style, an art deco Main Hall, and a further contemporary expansion known as the West Wing (housing Studios One and Two).

The [Main Hall](#) and [Studio One](#) are both available for Speakeasy presentations.





NTHAC MAIN HALL

This is the venue's largest indoor space. Built in the early 20th century, the historic interior was completed in later decades in the art deco style with plaster sconces and other geometric features. From the arched ceiling hang three unique and fully functioning pendant chandeliers.

The Main Hall is routinely used for a range of theatre, dance, music, and comedy performances as well as markets, seminars and talks. Its standard configuration is a tiered seating bank which seats up to 108 people with the space surrounded by full length black drapes, but it can be used in other configurations by negotiation.

Above the partially wood-lined walls to the north of the hall, is the balcony, which was fully renovated and reinforced in 2020 and is often used by sound and lighting technicians to control audio and visual aspects of performances.

Read the tech specs [here](#).



NTHAC STUDIO ONE

Studio One is a traditional blackbox performance space perfect for intimate theatrical productions. Its standard configuration is a tiered seating bank which seats up to 70 people with an upstage full length black drape, but it can also be used in other configurations by negotiation.

Read the tech specs [here](#).



Images: Studio One at Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre, image by Matt Krumins (top); *garçon* by wani toaishara (2025), image by Darren Gill (bottom corner)



Image: Matt Krumins

DAREBIN ARTS CENTRE (DAC)

The venue features a fully equipped proscenium arch theatre, with orchestra pit and counter-weight fly system, and fixed seating for up to 385. With this larger seating capacity, Speakeasy seasons at this venue are usually shorter in length (one week, 3-4 performances), or come with a compelling plan for reaching a significant new audience.

Productions in the DAC Theatre will be considered for February, March, April, May and October 2027.

Read the tech specs [here](#).



Image: *Body of Work + QWERTY* by Atlanta Eke, RDYSTDY and Daniel Jenatsch (2023), image by Gregory Lorenzutti.

THE PACKAGE OF SUPPORT

A typical Speakeasy production season involves 10 performances across 2 weeks, but smaller support packages for shorter season are possible. The packages of fees, staffing, equipment, space, and support vary from project to project, and are tailored to suit each show's specific needs.

As Darebin City Council is making a considerable investment in the works, each company must collaborate with the Arts Programming team on the delivery and marketing of their show.



Images: (L to R) *A Certain Mumble* by Amelia Jean O'Leary (2023), image by Sarah Walker; *Bunjil and Paliyang* by Amos Roach and company (2025), image by Ben Clark; Bloomshed's *Pride & Prejudice* (2025), image by Sarah Walker.

STANDARD PRESENTATIONS RECEIVE

- Up to 4 weeks of rehearsal time in one of our rehearsal rooms
- Up to 2 weeks of presentation time in either Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre or Darebin Arts Centre
- The use of available venue technical equipment (see the Darebin Arts website for technical specifications of each space)
- An artist/company fee. This is dependent upon audience capacity and season length
 - ◊ A 2-week season receives \$16,000-\$20,000 and a box office split of 80/20 (Darebin obtaining 80%)
 - ◊ A one-week season receives up to \$10,000-\$12,000 fees and a box office split of 80/20 (Darebin obtaining 80%)
- A technical supervisor for the duration of your season and an additional technician to support bump in and out.
- Front of house and box office staffing
- Access services: We work with artists to provide access services that suit the nature of their production, such as Auslan-interpreted sessions, social scripts and relaxed performances.
- Marketing and publicity support: Marketing is a collaborative effort between the artist/company and the Darebin Arts team. Our support generally includes a hero image photoshoot, copy review, a publicist, production photography, printed posters and social media advertising.

The package of fees and support is subject to change and negotiation, depending on the nature and needs of each show.

PROGRAM SUITABILITY

The presentation program is for works that are sufficiently tested and developed. You and your team are now ready to put the work into production, and package it for an audience.

Presentations are required to have their teams mostly confirmed at the time of application, and a clear plan for obtaining additional financial support if needed.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be selected by the following criteria:

- Creative and Cultural Merit
- Viability of the Project
- Impact of the Project

These criteria will be guided by the following prompts:

Creative and Cultural Merit

- Is original, compelling, imaginative and timely
- Is clearly articulated and rigorously thought out
- Demonstrates an awareness of the work's artistic and cultural context
- Speaks to current community concerns and celebrations

Viability

- Has a skilled team with the demonstrated capacity to deliver the proposed project
- Is technically able to be delivered in the chosen venue
- Demonstrates an understanding of the show's target audiences and how to reach them
- Demonstrates the ability to deliver the work in the timeframe required
- If required, evidence of further support (government, philanthropic, private, etc.) as well as support from other sector and community organisations. Whilst we don't ask for a detailed budget, a realistic plan to attract the required funding to stage the work is highly recommended.

SELECTION CRITERIA CON'T

Impact

- Offers audiences something original, unexpected and entertaining
- Makes an original contribution to a cultural conversation
- Pushes the artist's practice forward
- Engages meaningfully with underrepresented parts of the community
- Contributes to the vitality and creativity of Darebin

Applications must be submitted via the Smartygrants platform. If an online form application is a significant barrier to you, please see Application Support (last page of the guidelines) for contact details to discuss your project.



Images: (L to R) *Truthclub* by Jonathan Homsey (2023), image by Wildhardt; *Peacemongers* by The People (2024), image by Daren Gill; *Apocrypha* by Oozing Future (2024), image by 3 Fates Media.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Once successful, Speakeasy Presentations cannot then receive funding from other current Darebin Council support programs for the same stage of activity.

Applicants do not have to be a Darebin resident to apply.

Darebin City Council staff are not eligible to apply for this program.



KEY DATES

Applications Open: Monday 4 May 2026

On-line Information Session: Tuesday 19 May 2026, 6pm

In-person Information Session: Tuesday 26 May 2026, 6pm

Applications Close: Sunday 14 June 2026, 11.59pm

All applicants will be notified of an outcome by 17 August 2026

Images: (L to R) *One Night Only* by Jackson Castiglione and Rawcus (2025), image by Darren Gill; *Mature Skin* by Gabrielle Fallen (2026), image by Gregory Lorenzutti; *TANTRUM for 6* by Harrison Ritchie-Jones (2025), image by Darren Gill.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The four stages for program selection are:

STAGE 1: PANEL ASSESSMENT

Applications are assessed by a rotating independent panel of local artists. The selection panel creates a shortlist of projects to progress to Stage 2.

STAGE 2: INTERVIEW

Applicants progressing to Stage 2 will be asked for further detail to assist in understanding if we are the right fit for your work. This may include further discussions around the production vision, technical requirements, your vision for marketing materials or additional information required from your application.

STAGE 3: INITIAL OFFER

Once we are confident we can deliver everything you need to realise your work, we will formulate the package of support, agree on key milestones for technical and marketing information, and negotiate the dates and details of your season with us.

STAGE 4: CONFIRMATION AND CONTRACTING

We lock in the season, complete the contract, and prepare to put



Images: (L to R) *Body Corp* by Sarah Aiken (2025), image by Darren Gill; *THE BLOK!* by A Daylight Connection (2025), image by Jacinta Keefe.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are submitted online using:

<http://darebin.smartygrants.com.au>

Step 1: Access the SmartyGrants webpage by using the above link.

Step 2: Log in (if you haven't used SmartyGrants to submit an online application form before, you need to register. To do this you need to have an email address and set up a password).

Step 3: Select Darebin Arts Speakeasy Presentations 2027 and begin drafting your application.

Step 4: Contact Darebin Arts Programming Team if you have any questions

Step 5: [Submit your application](#) by 11.59PM Sunday 14 June 2026

APPLICATION SUPPORT

An online information session will be held online on **Tuesday 19 May**, and an in-person info session will be held at Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre on **26 May 2026**. If you would like to attend please [RSVP HERE](#) or email april.erskine@darebin.vic.gov.au. The online session will be recorded and be made available on the Darebin Arts website from 21 May until applications close.

If you want to know more about the Speakeasy program, the selection criteria or need support to finalise your application, please feel free to email your questions to the programming team or make a time to chat with us.

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