

DAREBIN  
ARTS  
SPEAKEASY

# 2026 PRESENTATION PROGRAM

## APPLICATION GUIDELINES



Darebin  
Arts

*Apocrypha(2024)*  
by Oozing Future  
Photo by 3Fates Media

# 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 arts sector so iconic:

Bloomshed, **Bullet Heart Club**, Harrison Ritchie-Jones, **Na Djinang Circus**, Atlanta Eke, **Oozing Future**, Double Water Sign, **Rawcus**, Gravity Dolls, **The Wholesome Hour**, Susie Dee and Melissa Reeves, **Joel Bray**, Michele Lee, **Alisdair Macindoe**, Riot Stage, **Richard J Frankland**, Stephanie Lake, **ILBIJERRI Theatre Company**, Hot Brown Honey, **Emilie Collyer**, Mish Grigor, **Dancenorth**, Taree Sansbury, **Counterpilot**, Anna Seymour, **RDYSTDY**, Lab Kelpie, **The Listies**, Joshua Pether, **Kerensa Diball**, Yuhui Ng-Rodriguez, **Disability Slapstick Plan**, Victoria Chiu, **Everybody NOW**, Lemony S Puppet Theatre, **Ridiculusmus**, LaBoite, **Maurial Spearim**, Little Ones Theatre, **Bec Jensen**, Sarah Aiken, **New Working Group**, House of Vnholy, **Speak Percussion**, Zoey Dawson, **Declan Greene**, Elbow Room, **Gravity & Other Myths**, Yana Alana, **Family of Strangers**, MKA, **Paula van Beek**, No Show, **The Hayloft Project**, Sammy J, **Candy Bowers**, Zoe Coombs Marr, **Sandra Long**, Yumi Umiumare, **Circa**, Finucane and Smith, **Stella Young**, Leah Shelton and many more.

DAREBIN ARTS RECOGNISES THE WURUNDJERI WOI WURRUNG PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND CUSTODIANS OF THIS LAND. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR CONTINUING CONNECTION TO LAND, WATER, AND CULTURE. WE PAY OUR RESPECTS TO ELDERS PAST AND PRESENT.



*Caravan Burlesque (2013)*  
by Funicane & Smith  
Photo by Paul Dunn

## APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

The Presentation program partners with 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.





## ABOUT THE VENUE

There are three theatre spaces available for Speakeasy productions in 2026 – Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre's [Main Hall](#) and [Studio One](#) and Darebin Arts Centre's [Main Theatre](#).

Read over the venue descriptions and tech specs, and choose the space 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 (NTHAC)

This iconic performing arts centre sits amid a busy strip of shops, bars, restaurants and music venues on High St, 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, accessed through the building's main entrances. Built in the early 19th 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.

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.

The space is flexible and can accommodate a range of different setups and presentation modes. There is a static truss in the ceiling in the ceiling to support lighting, audio, AV and black drapes. The drapes can be drawn to fully enclose the performance space.

The standard configuration of the space is a tiered seating bank which can seat up to 108 patrons (including 2 rows on the floor) which allows for a flat floor stage of approximately 11 x 11 metres with the black drapes in place.

[Read the tech specs here.](#)



Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre  
Main Hall audience seating  
Photo by Matt Krumins





## NTHAC STUDIO ONE

Studio One offers a more traditional black-box performance space. The walls in Studio One have been fitted with sound management infrastructure and a black drape option at the north end. The room also includes a fixed audio system and a static lighting grid.

The green room, which has the capacity for 8 to 10 performers, can be accessed from a separate door located behind the drape with easy access to toilets.

The standard configuration of this space is a tiered seating bank which can seat up to 70 patrons (including two rows on the floor) which allows for a flat floor stage of approximately 10 x 10 metres.

[Read the tech specs here.](#)

Below: Northcote Town Hall Arts Centre  
Studio One audience seating  
Photo by Matt Krumins





## DAREBIN ARTS CENTRE (DAC)

This dedicated performing arts centre on Bell Street, Preston was built in 1996, with an expansive, welcoming foyer redesigned by Sibling Architecture in 2021. A large on-site car park adds to the convenience and versatility of this venue.

## DAC Theatre

This is a fully equipped proscenium arch theatre, with orchestra pit, counter-weight fly system, and fixed seating for up to 385. With its large stage, ample backstage area and dressing rooms, this theatre suits works of scale across art forms. The structure of the building is also load-rated for live circus.

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, May and October 2026.

[Read the tech specs here.](#)

# 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.

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. Presentations have generally had substantial creative development, should only require up to four weeks in our spaces for final rehearsal and technical work and are ready to be produced and packaged for an audience.

A typical Speakeasy production season involves 10 performances across two weeks, but smaller support packages for limited seasons and one-off events are also 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.



*The Whale* (2019)  
by Fleur Kilpatrick  
Photo by Theresa Harrison





*TANTRUM for 6 (2025)*  
by Harrison Ritchie-Jones  
Photo by Darren Gill

## THE PACKAGE OF SUPPORT

We provide a total package of around \$50,000 of combined cash and in-kind support for each presentation of a season. 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.

## STANDARD PRESENTATIONS RECEIVE:

- Up to four weeks of rehearsal time in one of our rehearsal spaces
- In-kind presentation venue for a one- or two-week season
- The use of available venue technical equipment during the production period (see the [Darebin Arts website](#) for technical specifications of each space)
- An artist/company fee: this is dependent upon the size and shape of the project
  - A two-week season receives \$20,000 in artist/company fees and a box office split of 80/20 (Darebin obtaining 80%)
  - A one-week season receives \$12,000 in artist/company fees and a box office split of 80/20 (Darebin obtaining 80%)
- Up to 60 hours of technical staff support during bump in and bump out, and a technician on duty during your season.

- Front of House and Box Office staffing for the run of your season
- Support to provide access services: The program incorporates a suite of access initiatives for artists and audiences to ensure arts participation is for everyone. We work with artists to provide access services that suit the nature of each production, such as Auslan interpreted sessions, audio-described 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 includes a hero image photoshoot, copy review, a publicist, production photography, and a mix of digital and print distribution.

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

# SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be selected by the following criteria:

1. Creative and Cultural Merit
2. Viability of the Project
3. 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
- Interrogates current community concerns and celebrations

## VIABILITY OF THE PROJECT

- 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. A coherent and realistic plan to attract the required funding to stage the work is highly recommended.

## IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

- Offers audiences something original, unexpected and entertaining
- Aligns meaningfully with [Darebin's 2041 Community Vision](#)
- 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 these Guidelines) for contact details to discuss your idea.

# ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The four stages for program selection are:

## STAGE 1: PANEL ASSESSMENT

Applications are assessed by a rotating 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 the show on sale and into production.



*Djuna (2025)*  
by Eva Rees

Produced by Bullet Heart Club  
Photo by Darren Gill



# 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 on-line 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 2026** and begin drafting your application.

## STEP 4:

Contact Darebin Arts Programming Team if you have any questions.

## STEP 5:

Submit your application by **11:59 pm Sunday 29 June 2025**.



*Coranderrk (2014)*  
by Illbijerri Theatre Company  
Photo by Nicola Dracoulis

## ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

## KEY DATES

Once successful, Speakeasy Presentations cannot then receive funding from other current Darebin City Council support programs.

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

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

APPLICATIONS OPEN: Monday 19 May 2025

ONLINE INFORMATION SESSION: 6 pm  
Tuesday 3 June 2025

IN-PERSON INFORMATION SESSION: 6 pm  
Tuesday 17 June 2025

APPLICATIONS CLOSE: 11:59 pm Sunday 29 June 2025

Successful applicants will be informed by  
31 August 2025

*Glass (2021)*  
by Rawcus with Marc Brew  
Photo by Aaron Walker



# APPLICATION SUPPORT

An online information session will be held online on **3 June 2025**, and an in-person info session will be held on **17 June 2025**. If you would like to attend either event please [RSVP HERE](#) or email [april.erskine@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:april.erskine@darebin.vic.gov.au).

The online session will be recorded and be made available on the Darebin Arts website from 5 June 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 one of the programming team to make a time to chat with the Programming Team.

**Beau McCafferty — Strategic Leader of Programming**  
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**Mark Pritchard — Senior Arts Programmer**  
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**National Relay Service**  
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If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service.



**Speak Your Language**  
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