

## **Bitter Pill are launching The Painkiller Prize, a new commissioning prize for playwrights in the UK.**

Our objective is to find and then commission a playwright who has a fresh and exciting voice.

Particularly, we want to champion a playwright who:

- is audacious
- places humour at the heart of their work
- embraces complexity and moral ambiguity

Unlike a lot of other prizes, we're not asking you to submit a draft of your play in order to be selected and awarded a £7,500 commission.

Instead, we would like you to submit a pitch form, answering a range of questions and providing an example of your writing.

After this, we will shortlist a small number of playwrights who we will meet with before awarding one playwright a full commission.

We will then work with this playwright to help them deliver a completed draft of their play for a rehearsed reading at a theatre based in London.

### **What we are looking for?**

The Painkiller Prize has been established with the goal of encouraging and promoting the work of playwrights who not only see humour as a way of making audiences laugh, but furthermore, view it as a crucial part of the way they express themselves.

We really like what John Lahr said of Joe Orton:

*"Nobody came closer than Orton to reviving the outrageous and violent prankster's spirit of comedy and creating the purest (and rarest) of drama's by-products: joy"*

We also encourage you to read Anthony Neilson's article [Don't be so boring](#) which he wrote for The Guardian in 2007. You can find that [here](#).

### **How much detail does your pitch need to have?**

You have 1000 words to communicate as much as you can about your idea and the clearer your pitch is the more likely it is that it will resonate with us. The prize, however, is a commission for a playwright to write something **based** upon their pitch.

We fully anticipate that the pitch largely represents the genesis of an idea rather than a fully fleshed out synopsis. The pitch should, however, communicate information about the plot, characters, themes and flavour of the play you intend to write.

What you pitch and whatever you might go onto produce **must** be written for 4 actors or under and have a projected running time of 45-70 mins.

### **What is the reason for these limitations?**

We believe that these limitations provide playwrights with a reasonable amount of space within which to manoeuvre (some of the finest plays of the last 50 years have been written for small casts and with short running times).

There are, however, a couple of other reasons it is important to stick to this brief.

**Cast Size** - In an ideal world, we hope that the play that results from the commission will be staged and we think the chance for this will be much higher for a play with a small cast.

**Length** – This is in accordance with current industry rates, a commission fee of £7,500 is for plays that are no longer than 70 minutes.

### **Who is this opportunity open to?**

Anyone based in the UK.

While we will be asking for applicants to submit examples of their writing and their CVs we want to be clear that this opportunity is not just for individuals who consider themselves playwrights.

We anticipate that the winning writer will probably have some experience having written for theatre or another medium (Radio, TV, Film, Comedy) – though we are prepared to be surprised!

### **Can I fill out the pitch form more than once?**

You are only allowed to make one application per person.

### **Can you apply with a writing partner or as part of a collective?**

If you'd like to pitch alongside someone else or as part of a writing group that's absolutely fine. Bear in mind, however, that you are only allowed to make one application per person and if you apply with someone else, you are no longer able to apply independently of them.

### **When can you apply?**

Playwrights will be able to submit their applications/pitch from **Monday 25 September until Monday 13 November 2023** and they should be sent to [info@bitterpilltheatre.com](mailto:info@bitterpilltheatre.com) with the subject line PRIZE APPLICATION

### **How to apply?**

In order to apply you will need to include the following in your email:

- **A completed pitch form that can be found on our website.** We encourage playwrights not to hold back in their responses!
- **A copy of your CV.** We are keen to receive applications from UK-based writers of any and all backgrounds but while each application will have a significant bearing on which playwrights progress to the next stage we'd also like to know about your career and any previous work. This CV does not have to be a "Theatre" CV. If you have written for a different medium or this will be your first full length play we still want to hear from you.
- **A sample of your writing (no longer than 1,500 words).** This sample should be written for stage but can take the form of a monologue or dialogue.

We would also request that you fill out our monitoring form which can be found [here](#).

### **When should you expect to hear from us?**

Once the submission window is closed, we will assess how many applications we have received and be in touch with a sense of how long we anticipate the process will take.

### **How many writers will be shortlisted?**

The shortlist will comprise of 5-10 playwrights. Ahead of the shortlist being compiled we plan to meet with larger group of longlisted playwrights. At this stage we may ask longlisted playwrights if they'd like to send us another example of their writing.