

**Transcription**  
**Open Submissions Workshop #2: Your questions answered**

Audio file location: https://soundcloud.com/traverse-theatre/open-submissions-workshops-2-your-questions-answered

Video (with closed captions): https://youtu.be/b9vwMISfZO0

[BEGIN AUDIO]

[laid back electronic beat]

Hello!

Welcome to Week 2 of the Traverse Theatre’s Open Submissions Workshop series. I’m Eleanor White and I’m the Literary Associate at the Traverse Theatre. In this week’s session, I’ll be answering some of your questions about our Open Submissions initiative, and about playwriting more generally.

Let’s get started!

[Graphic reading: **What’s the point in doing this when theatres are closed?**]

It might seem a strange time to launch workshops like these, when we’re unable to gather in buildings and spaces to create or experience theatre together physically. But, that time will come again.

Theatre has survived for thousands of years, and this period of uncertainty marks a pause, or reimagining, in the long life of an artform that has evolved and changed alongside civilisation. Things will look different for a while but we, as well as many other theatres around the world, are continuing to create. We want to make sure that, when we can all gather and experience stories together again, that they are the most exciting, imaginative, urgent, adventurous, entertaining snd important stories out there.

So, we want to keep talking to writers, and keep discovering new voices and stories that are going to be what we want – and need – to experience when this time is over.

[Graphic reading: **Are you still working with commissioned writers?**]

Absolutely! The amazing writers and theatremakers already under commission with us are continuing to develop their pieces so that we’re ready to share them with audiences as soon as we can.

[Graphic reading: **How do I get involved with your Open Submissions Workshops?**]

You don’t need to register or sign up anywhere in order to access these workshops.

They’re completely free, and open to anyone in the world who’s keen to develop their writing.

Every Wednesday, we’ll share a new workshop on our channels, which will be free for everyone to access.

These workshops will remain online until September 2021, so you’re able to access and engage with them as you see fit. To get started, all you need to do is visit our website or our Youtube channel, select a workshop video, and start watching!

If you’d prefer an audio version, those are available through our website too.

[Graphic reading: **Who can submit their script?**]

Anyone and everyone based in the UK or Ireland can send their script to us. We welcome submissions from writers at all stages of career – you don’t need to be an established playwright to send your script to us.

[Graphic reading: **Why do you accept scripts?**]

It’s really important to us that anyone with a story to tell can send it to the Traverse, for us to read and consider.

Our Open Submissions initiative is a key way through which we get to know writers, track their artistic development, and build relationships with them. It introduces us to stories and voices that we’re excited about, that we might not have come across otherwise. As Scotland’s New Writing theatre, we’re always actively searching for those brilliant new voices who will be occupying our stages in years to come.

If you’re dithering about submitting your script to us, please do send it in. We want to hear from you!

[Graphic reading: **Do you accept extracts?**]

At the moment, we’re only able to accept full-length plays. It’s not an exact science, but this is usually a minimum of about 50 pages or 35-40 pages for a monologue.

[Graphic reading: **Are scripts read anonymously?**]

Yes! Scripts are read anonymously by our panel of readers, which is made up of theatre professionals from all over the UK.

If one of our readers is excited by a script, they’ll recommend that a member of Team Traverse read it. The writer’s anonymity is maintained until the Traverse gets in touch with them with the outcome of their submission. Reading scripts anonymously allows us to really engage with the story that you want to tell.

[Graphic reading: **My play has had an amateur production. Can I still submit it?**]

Yes! We also accept scripts which have received rehearsed readings, as long as that script wasn’t commissioned by or attached to another organisation.

[Graphic reading: **What kind of plays are you looking for?**]

I don’t want to put too many stipulations on this, because there’s no formula for a perfect play, and often the most exciting submissions are the ones that take us by surprise, and just feel completely fresh and original.

In addition to the qualities I mentioned last week of urgent, accessible, and entertaining, there are a couple of things that we tend to look out for.

These are:

- Ambitious or innovative writing

- Scripts that really embrace theatre as the medium through which their story is told.

(These are scripts and stories that feel like they need to be plays, rather than films or books.)

- Big ideas told with heart.

- Stories that have something to say about the world we live in or where we might be headed.

- Stories that have a Scottish context or resonance. It’s important to note that these do not need to be set in Scotland!

- And plays that reflect the diversity of the society that we live in.

[Graphic reading: **What kind of scripts are not eligible?**]

Unfortunately, we cannot accept musicals, adaptations, or scripts written for a different medium.

[Graphic reading: **How should I lay out my script?**]

The rules for play formatting are generally less rigid than for other mediums, so as long as you’re clear, feel free to use what works best for you and your play.

If you can, take a look at some published playtexts, to see how other writers have approached it.

BBC Writer’s Room also has a helpful formatting guide, if you’re looking for some more concrete tips!

[Graphic reading: **Can I submit more than one script?**]

No, we only accept one script per writer per year.

[Graphic reading: **I’m worried that my script isn’t good enough. What should I do?**]

You should submit it anyway!

We’re not looking for perfectly polished scripts, we’re looking for writers with exciting voices. When we read scripts, we’re looking for potential – a story or an idea that feels new or different or relevant to today. We want to find scripts through Open Submissions that we can develop in tandem with the writer. Please don’t be afraid to send us your script – it might be just what we're looking for!

[Graphic reading: **When does the window open?**]

This year, the window opens on September 1st. You can send us your script anytime between then and October 31st.

You will receive an email acknowledging your submission. Your play will be read anonymously by a member of our reader’s panel. If there is something about the play that excites them, they will put it forward for further consideration. All plays that reach this stage of the process are guaranteed to receive feedback.

The Traverse Artistic Team whittles these promising plays down to a shortlist. These plays receive intensive script development, a dramaturgical attachment to the Traverse, and the opportunity to showcase their work to a Traverse audience.

As we receive a high volume of submissions every year, it can take up to nine months for us to respond to everyone.

[Graphic reading: **Who have you previously discovered through Open Submissions?**]

Scripts which have previously been developed by the Traverse through its Open Submissions programme include; *Gagarin Way* by Gregory Burke, *Milk* by Ross Dunsmore and *Crash* by Andy Duffy.

More recently, writers such as Natalie McGrath and Conor O’Loughlin have developed pieces with us, and both Natalie and Conor have gone on to collaborate on different writing projects with the Traverse and some of our partner companies.

[Graphic reading: **What other places can I send my script to?**]

We have a list on our website of a number of other theatres and organisations with script submission initiatives and opportunities. We’ll share the link to the webpage on the following slide.

[link <https://www.traverse.co.uk/get-involved/writers/open-script-submissions>]

[Graphic reading: **Will all of the Open Submissions workshops be free?**]

Yes – all 16 will be available free of charge for the entire time they’re online, until September 2021.

It’s incredibly important to us to support artists at all levels; every contributor has been paid for their time with us and it’s also why we’ve made them free of charge for everyone.

This is possible thanks to the support of our funders, including Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council, but we always welcome more support.

If you enjoy the workshop series and wish to make a donation to help us deliver this kind of work, you can do so via our website.

Thank you so much for tuning in!

If you have a question that wasn’t covered in today’s workshop, please do get in touch – you can tweet us @traversetheatre, or email us at writing@traverse.co.uk.

Join us next week for a workshop with Frances Poet all about getting started with your writing.

See you then!

[laid back electronic beat]

[AUDIO ENDS]