



Manchester Playwright: Call Out

REAL CONTENTMENT is a 9-month artist exchange programme that will be the start of a lasting partnership between Manchester and Nanjing, both UNESCO Cities of Literature and UNESCO Cities of Lifelong Learning. Collaborations between six artists - poets, illustrators and playwrights - will create new multilingual work to be published and exhibited in both cities in 2025 including at the Festival of Libraries in Manchester in June 2025. All creative collaborations plus a parallel school-engagement programme respond to the ecological themes of the poetry of award-winning poet and essayist Han Dong.

This joint project will create a lasting partnership between Manchester, UK and Nanjing, China, building on the fact that both are UNESCO Cities of Literature and UNESCO Cities of Lifelong Learning.

At the heart of the 9-month programme to launch the partnership is an artist exchange which brings Chinese and UK poets, illustrators and playwrights together to create new work. Creative outputs launched/performed in each city will include a bilingual illustrated poetry collection from 4 artists working collaboratively (2 poets, 2 illustrators, one from each city) and a play (written by 2 playwrights, one Chinese, one from the UK). We will ensure the artists appointed in each city will be from under-represented groups by ethnicity, sexuality or disability and that half the final selection identifies as female. The creative collaborations will be responding to the ecological theme of Real Contentment, from the poetry of Han Dong, specifically the line 'real contentment...[of] a ray of sunlight / Shining in a woodland glade' (Let Me Describe The Rainstorm, 1986). Han Dong, an award-winning poet, novelist and essayist, is published in both China and the UK.

Parallel to the creation and distribution of new creative work by 6 artists from China and the UK, a schools engagement programme will be launched for 300 young people aged 7-11 in both cities to respond to the same theme in writing, drawing and photography at the Lunar New Year. Selected creative work by young people will be displayed alongside the sharing of professional work in June 2025 in Nanjing and in Manchester.

This call out is for a Manchester-based playwright to be paired with a Nanjing playwright to create a new play. There is a fixed fee of £3,000 for this work which includes a paid trip to Nanjing in March 2025 and participation in Manchester in June 2025 at the Festival of Libraries with script-in-hand readings of the play, as well as the possibility for inclusion in the programme's anthology and discussion for production.

Key deliverables:

- To collaborate with a Nanjing playwright on creating a new play. This will include online meetings, in-person working in Nanjing and creating the work in partnership with the playwright
- 1x international travel: Nanjing, March 2025
- Participating in the script-in-hand readings of the play in Manchester at the Festival of Libraries (4-8 June 2025)
- Contributing to the evaluation of the project particularly on the learnings and challenges of working cross-culturally

Characteristics

We are looking for a playwright who:

- Lives, works or studies in Greater Manchester
- Has a history of creating dramatic work of at least 2 years and/or has professional writing credits
- Has a strong and demonstrable relationship with Manchester
- Is able/willing to learn to work cross-culturally and with cultural sensitivity
- Has experience/willingness to work with other artists on a joint project
- Is comfortable producing commissions with specific briefs and tight deadlines
- Is comfortable solo-travelling internationally
- Is passionate about representing Manchester and increasing its profile as a city of literature.

Application Process

Playwrights interested in applying for the role should send an expression of interest to anita.ngai@manchestercityofliterature.com outlining their suitability for the role and detailing what they can offer as the Programme Playwright. This letter should be no longer than 3 pages of A4.

Should you prefer, we will accept expressions of interest submitted in the form of a video or audio recording. These should be no more than 8 minutes in length.

We are also inviting applicants to submit an artistic CV which demonstrates your experience as a playwright. This should be no more than 2 pages of A4 and should speak to the Programme Playwright characteristics outlined above.

Finally, we request applicants submit examples of their work – an excerpt not to exceed 10 pages from a script or approximately 10 minutes in run time – to support their application. This can be any dramatic work of your choice, a new unpublished work or a personal favourite that gives Manchester City of Literature and its partners a sample of the work that you do. We have no preference as to the format. Applicants can submit written documents or links to the audio/video of the script being read/performed. For files exceeding 5MB, these should be provided as links to common host sites such as YouTube, Vimeo or SoundCloud.

Closing date for applications is Sunday 5th January 2025.

Selection Process:

Once the deadline for application has passed, the Manchester City of Literature team will shortlist applicants and arrange for interviews to take place.

Ahead of the interview, shortlisted applicants will be provided with further details of what the interview will entail so that they can adequately prepare.

Notification of shortlisted applicants by: Thursday 9th January 2025

Interviews: Monday-Tuesday 13-14th January 2025

Further Information

Should you have any questions, please direct them to anita.ngai@manchestercityofliterature.com in the first instance.

Values of Manchester City of Literature:

The successful applicants will be expected to support the realisation of the collective vision for Manchester City of Literature, formed through conversations with stakeholders across the city, for: an innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing, where diverse voices are celebrated, where creative talent and industries are nurtured and where literary activity changes lives.

They will demonstrate and promote the City of Literature's core values, which are:

- **Distinctive:** Creating distinctive cultural experiences inspired by Manchester's unique, radical character and rich cultural heritage whilst looking to the future.
- **Inclusive:** Celebrating the rich diversity of voices in the city, building on the strengths of Manchester's people and widening participation in literary activity.
- **Transformative:** Developing skills, nurturing creative talent and transforming lives.
- **Connected:** Linking and supporting literary activity and enabling collective advocacy for Manchester's literary community and international collaborations.
- **World-leading:** A beacon for high quality, culturally democratic, truly diverse literary activity.

As a UNESCO Creative City, Manchester City Of Literature is committed to building international relationships with other Creative Cities and believes that these relationships and sharing of practice create bridges of understanding between peoples. These bridges cross political, geographical, ethnic, cultural, religious and other divides. Manchester City Of Literature therefore supports the right to freedom of opinion and expression and believes there is a significant benefit to be gained from working in cooperation with Creative Cities to champion freedom of expression, share best practice and demonstrate the benefits that can be gained in cultural, economic and social terms from enabling such freedoms.

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