

Residencies at Little Sparta - Call for applications

Push the Boat Out (PTBO), Edinburgh's International Poetry Festival is partnering with Little Sparta on a residency programme to support the creation of new poetry-led work, responding to the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, the gardens at Little Sparta and this year's festival theme *The Space Between*.

As a brand new opportunity for 2026, Push the Boat Out is delighted to be offering a residency for two Scotland-based mid-career artists to collaborate and develop new work. In doing so, Push the Boat Out furthers its commitment to support artists, and addresses a lack of opportunities in general for mid-career poets, with particularly few opportunities to develop and platform longer poetry-led pieces. For the inaugural year of what we hope to make an annual programme, we're thrilled to be partnering with Little Sparta, to give the artists the chance to respond to the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay, the gardens at Little Sparta and this year's festival theme.

PTBO is an environment where all variations of poetry are encouraged to grow, evolve and collide with other vital art forms. The programme features a vibrant mix of poetry, spoken word, lyricism, music, performance, discussion and installations across our four-day festival. PTBO aspires to be a catalyst for new work and encourage work that challenges the boundaries of poetry and explores intersections with other art forms.

The residency will lead to a new collaborative poetry-led piece, to be performed first at Little Sparta on 27 September and later during our 2026 festival (12 to 15 November) in Edinburgh's Pleasance. The residency programme will last three weeks, is not residential and the on site time can be scheduled by mutual agreement and need not be consecutive. It will consist of around 1.5 weeks at Little Sparta (a minimum of one week must be spent on site), with the remaining time spent in rehearsal and development, and the two performances.

The artists will be expected to develop a work of 20-30 minutes in length. These works should be 'in conversation' with another art form, and we actively encourage collaboration. We invite submissions from pairs of artists living and working in Scotland: the lead applicant must be a poet with at least one published work. Submissions are welcome from artists working in any of Scotland's indigenous languages or BSL, and from people under-represented in the literature sector.

To further support the selected artists, PTBO will offer five sessions of coaching to each artist. This will be in partnership with [Coaching for Creatives](#). The coaching may focus on the development of the commission but could also be used to explore a different aspect of your work or career, as decided by each artist and their coach.

PTBO encourages divergence, exploration and experimentation when responding to the gardens, Ian Hamilton Finlay's work and the festival theme, *The Space Between* both in terms of theme and form. While we appreciate that the piece will find inspiration and go in new directions during the residency, submissions should outline the form artists envisage their piece taking and themes it will explore. Artists are invited to form their ideas in a direction that feels in keeping with their practice and speaks to their current intentions for their work.

Details:

- Artists will be paid a total of £2500 for three weeks of work, which includes the residency (non-residential), rehearsal and development time, and the two performances. A minimum of one week must be spent on site at Little Sparta, though this need not be in a single block.
- Applications should be submitted collaboratively, by two artists who intend to work together
- Each artist will receive an accompanying programme of coaching
- Artists will be reimbursed up to £700 to cover travel to Little Sparta, subsistence and accommodation if required during the residency. We can support with arranging local accommodation, but this is not included as part of the residency. Travel to and accommodation for the festival performance, if required, will be covered separately.
- Push the Boat Out will cover the cost of rehearsal space, if required, and 2 days working with a technician.
- The developed work must be 20-30 minutes in duration when performed.
- The piece must be poetry-led and in conversation with another art form.
- Applications are welcome from artists living and working in Scotland.
- The lead artist must be a poet with at least one published work (pamphlet or full collection).
- Applications are welcomed for works in English, Scots, Doric, Gaelic and BSL.
- Applications can be written or submitted via video.
- The panel will consist of representatives from PTBO's programming committee.

Timeline:

- Deadline for application: Monday 29 June
- Successful applicants contacted: w/c 14 July
- On site Residency: roughly one and a half weeks days, dates to be agreed between the artists and Little Sparta, between the end of July and early September
- First meeting with coach: August/September
- Following coaching sessions: between September and January, a timeline agreed by each artist and mentor
- Rehearsals: September and October, dates to be agreed between the artists
- Performance at Little Sparta: Sunday 27 September
- Festival performance: during the festival, which takes place 12 - 15 November

To apply please send:

- A proposal of max 1 page (written) or 5 minutes (video), detailing the form and themes of the project you would develop during the residency. This should clearly outline how you are responding to the theme and would explain why you want to collaborate with each other.
- Up to 3 links to previous work
- CV for each artist (max 2 pages)
- A personal statement of max 1 page explaining your suitability for the residency and why you think you would particularly benefit from coaching at this stage
- Complete our [Equalities Monitoring form](#)

Proposals should be sent to Annie Rutherford, Creative Producer, PTBO: annie.rutherford@pushtheboatout.org, and should include the words "Residency Application" in the subject line.

Questions or requests for informal discussions should be sent to Emma Collins, Director, PTBO: emma.collins@pushtheboatout.org

Push the Boat Out is supported by Creative Scotland.

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