



## **INTERNATIONAL PLAYABLE THEATRE LAB GUIDANCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Upstart Theatre will select 4 artists from Mexico and North Macedonia to take part in a fully online, international digital residency to explore the potential of interactive and Playable Theatre.

The International Playable Theatre Lab will take place over two weeks from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> to Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September *and* from Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

**Application deadline: midday (12pm) UK/GMT+1 time, Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

### **EVENTS WITH FURTHER INFORMATION**

#### **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm UK/GMT+1 time - live introduction to the IPTL**

Hosted over Zoom, Upstart Theatre will introduce the programme and there will be a chance to ask questions about the IPTL and application process. You can sign up [here](#). The recording of this session will also be available online after the event.

#### **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June at 4pm UK/GMT+1 time - taster workshop**

If you've never encountered Playable Theatre before or want

to know more about the genre before applying, then you might find this helpful. You can sign up for this free workshop [here](#).

The above events are optional and purely for your benefit. Attendance at these events will not affect how your application is assessed.

**KEY DATES - please note: all times listed are in UK/GMT+1 time**

Tuesday 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2021	Applications open
Monday 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 - 4pm	Live Introduction
Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> June 2021 - 4pm	Playable Theatre Taster Workshop
Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021, midday 12pm	Deadline for applications
Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	All artists notified of whether they have been shortlisted or not.
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> and Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021 - between 4pm and 7pm	Shortlist interviews (exact time slots to be arranged with artists, no longer than 30 minutes per interview)
Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	All artists notified of whether they have been selected for the IPTL
Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> to Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> September 2021, 4pm - 7pm daily	Week 1 of IPTL digital residency

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September to  
Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, 4pm  
- 7pm daily

Week 2 of IPTL digital  
residency

## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYABLE THEATRE LAB**

The International Playable Theatre Lab is a two-week digital residency offering artists in North Macedonia and Mexico the opportunity to explore the potential of interactive and Playable Theatre. The programme is funded by the British Council and is produced by Playable Theatre company Upstart Theatre in partnership with Teatro al Cubo and MI Film.

The IPTL will bring together three theatre makers in North Macedonia and three in Mexico for a two-week online programme of exchange, training, mentoring and peer support, facilitated by Upstart Theatre. Each day of the residency, artists will take part in a half-day online workshop exploring a different approach to making theatre playable in the digital space, delivered by mentor artists who are experts in this approach.

Alongside these workshops, participating artists will be given several hours each day to work on a project of their own. Each artist will apply with a very early idea for a project in mind, which they will work on throughout the residency. In each workshop, the artists will explore ways in which they might use that tool or approach to develop their project. At the end of the fortnight, the participating artists will share a scratch version of their project with their fellow participants

and the mentor artists.

## **WHERE AND HOW WILL IT TAKE PLACE?**

The International Playable Theatre Lab is a fully online programme and will be delivered exclusively using digital platforms such as Zoom, Gather.town, and similar applications.

## **ABOUT THE MENTORS**

**Please note: further mentors to be confirmed.**

### **Chloe Mashiter**

Chloe is a theatre and game-maker specialising in immersive, interactive and game-based performance. They are an associate of Coney and have worked as a deviser-performer for companies including Parabolic Theatre, Fire Hazard Games and Secret Cinema. Their digital work includes coding Parabolic's *The House of Cenci* and creating audio game *The Last Thing Left* as Headlong's Resident Digital Artist. Chloe acts as a creative technician for remote performances, having worked with streamed performance for four years and facilitated online shows such as *Manimals* and *If I Have To Repeat Myself One More Time I'm Going To*. They also published original TTRPGs as roll/flip/draw.

### **James Blakey**

James Blakey is a freelance theatre maker and director, and an Artistic Associate of Upstart Theatre. He was a founding director of Upstart's sister company Oscar Mike, developing

and presenting performances that invites audiences to play. Co-Directing with Tom Mansfield for Upstart / Oscar Mike includes *The Situation Room* (Hull Truck, The Lowry, Shoreditch Town Hall), *This City* (West Yorkshire Playhouse) and *The Falling Sickness* (Theatre in the Mill). James specialises in participatory practice, long-term community collaboration and social change partnership working. He is the Associate Director of Public Acts, England's National Theatre's initiative for extraordinary acts of theatre and community, the former Associate Artistic Director of citizens' theatre company Slung Low, and Associate Artist of industry-leading youth theatre, Company Three.

### **Rachel Briscoe, [Fast Familiar](#)**

Rachel Briscoe trained as a playwright (Royal Court and Soho theatres) and theatre director (National Theatre Directors Course). These days, she mainly works as a writer, dramaturg and producer. She is a lead artist of Fast Familiar, who make participatory, playful and political artwork, and who design audience-centric experiences which often utilise digital technology. Fast Familiar's *The Justice Syndicate* was longlisted for the Lumen Prize and received multiple 4 and 5 star reviews. In 2019 *Smoking Gun* was chosen by the Financial Times as one of their 'Top ten dramas to enjoy at home' during the first COVID-19 lockdown. Critic Mark Lawson (The Guardian, BBC Radio 4) reflected on Fast Familiar's rapid and successful adaptation to the conditions of 2020: "if prizes are given for lockdown drama, Fast Familiar should get a trophy for *The Evidence Chamber* and *Smoking Gun* – enjoyable but also scholarly entertainments. This is a

company to watch, whether digitally or, when it again becomes possible, in person.” *The Evidence Chamber*, played online by participants from over 20 countries, was also featured by the New York Times as “an especially successful way for theater to be enjoyed from a laptop.” *National Elf Service*, Fast Familiar’s first online puzzle game, was lauded by the escape room community. Review the Room called it “Refreshingly different (and beautifully assembled)” with high praise for the story. The Escape Matt-ster praised it for “one of the most well designed game interfaces I’ve seen in recent online game history” and declared “I unequivocally recommend this!”, while The Escape Room-er called it “An absolute stand out game in the whole play at home genre!”

### **Tassos Stevens, [Coney](#)**

Tassos is the Director of interactive theatre company Coney. As a maker on projects, he most frequently works as any of director, writer, interaction designer, facilitator, often designing for impact and learning. Projects for Coney include *A Small Town Anywhere*, *A Cat Escapes*, *The Loveliness Principle*, *Adventure One*, *REMOTE*, and the BAFTA-winning *Nightmare High*. Commissions and consultancy include Channel 4 Education, BBC Learning, Public Health England, ITV, Imperial War Museum. He’s spoken at events including SXSW, RSA State of The Arts, Tipping Point, and In Battalions. He regularly mentors other artists. Outside Coney he sometimes makes storytelling performance including *Jimmy Stewart...* in living rooms, and *Fortune*, and also designed the game *Papa Sangre*. Prior to Coney, he did a doctorate in Psychology, won the inaugural James Menzies-Kitchin Award for theatre directors,

did the National Theatre Studio Directors Course, ran the ROAR platform to support new work and new artists on the London fringe, and also worked as critic, teacher, many flavours of researcher, salesman, and chef.

### **Tom Mansfield, Upstart Theatre**

Tom is Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Upstart Theatre and acts as artistic lead on our theatre and digital projects. On stage, his work as director for Upstart includes *Beneath the City*, *Republic*, *Phone Home*, *Silent Planet*, *The Situation Room* and *The Falling Sickness*. He launched a balloon into space as part of the Andover Space Programme, and co-created The Chorus podcast with citizen artists in Birmingham and sound artist Duncan Grimley. As a digital artist, he created the viral immigration game *BritQuest* and is currently working on a digital political thriller, *Red Planet: Revolution*. He co-founded Upstart Theatre's DARE Festival, for which he has been artistic lead since 2016. Alongside his work with Upstart, Tom is a Connections Mentor Director for the National Theatre, and a visiting practitioner at the University of Birmingham. He has delivered teaching and productions for the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama; Birkbeck, University of London; University of South Wales; St Mary's University; and the University of Cumbria. He has previously worked as Youth Theatre Director at Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Assistant Director at Opera North, and as Resident Assistant Director at West Yorkshire Playhouse.

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCING COMPANIES**

Upstart Theatre is an arts charity based in London, UK that invites people to reimagine the world by making theatre playable. [www.upstart-theatre.co.uk](http://www.upstart-theatre.co.uk).

Teatro al Cubo is a performing arts company based in Mexico City, Mexico, that aims to provide its members with professional and artistic growth through creative and production processes. [www.teatroalcubo.com](http://www.teatroalcubo.com).

MI Film is a production company founded in 2018 by Ivica Dimitrijevic and Martin Ivanov, and based in Skopje, North Macedonia. They work in theatre and live performance, film and other cultural domains.

## **WHAT IS PLAYABLE THEATRE?**

“Playable theatre is live performance that engages audiences through active, meaningful participation.” - [Northeastern University](#)

When we talk about Playable Theatre, we’re thinking of performance which breaks down the barriers between performer and audience, and that creates a space for the audience to have genuine agency. For us at Upstart, this often means incorporating into the structure of our shows elements that you might find in games – we think of the audience as players as well as spectators. It might mean constructing branching narratives that the audience get to

choose together; making it possible for each audience member to navigate their own way through the show; or creating an improvised show based around the relationship between a performer and an audience member who takes on a role. As makers of Playable Theatre, we want our audiences to be able to affect the way the performance develops each night. As a result, each performance is a unique experience, created by the artist and the audience together.

## **WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

We're looking for proposals that are:

- **New.** Ideas for shows that have been previously presented elsewhere, had significant development, or have received funding from a public funder, trust, foundation, venue or organisation are not eligible. If you have self-funded or crowdfunded development on your show, please speak to us before applying to check eligibility.
- **Playable.** Does the work have meaningful opportunities for an audience to interact with it? The possibilities for how your work is playable are endless, but this could include game theatre, intimate one-on-one performances, or perhaps even a show that uses digital technology to pair live and online audiences together.
- **Can be presented digitally.** The IPTL is designed to explore the intersections between digital technology and Playable Theatre. And, as the programme will be presented digitally, it's important that you can share your progress online with

others in the residency. You can still be developing an idea that you eventually want to present to a live audience, but the sharing during the residency must be done in a way that allows other artists to understand more about the work.

- **Early Stage.** Given that this is a short digital residency, we're keen to stress that we are looking for initial ideas that can be trialled and presented as an in-development version to other artists at the end of the programme. We do not expect you to present the work with a complete production design. Similarly, if you already have a full production team in place, this probably isn't the right opportunity for your idea.

- **Can be developed within the residency.** The IPTL programme is designed for individual artists to learn about digital technology and Playable Theatre whilst developing their own idea for a Playable Theatre show. You can be planning to work with other artists or as part of a company to develop your idea during the programme, or at a later stage, but you must be able to progress your idea throughout the residency programme.

## **WHAT SELECTED ARTISTS WILL RECEIVE**

- Artists based in North Macedonia will receive a fee of 68750 Macedonian dollars for their participation in the International Playable Theatre Lab.

- Artists based in Mexico will receive a fee of 8000 pesos for their participation in the International Playable Theatre Lab.

- 10 sessions for workshops and training during the two-week digital residency, led by expert mentors in Playable Theatre and digital technology. These will take place daily between 4pm and 7pm UK/GMT+1 time.
- Open and ongoing networking and peer support throughout the residency via an online platform Gather.town for selected artists to develop relationships with each other throughout the programme.
- Marketing of the International Playable Theatre Lab to the international theatre industry. Please note that Upstart Theatre will market the IPTL as a whole but may also profile the selected artists too.
- You will retain complete creative control of your work and 100% ownership of the intellectual property rights. We ask you to acknowledge Upstart Theatre's support for your work (see 'Artist Commitments' below).

## **ARTIST COMMITMENTS**

- To attend all 10 days of the International Playable Theatre Lab digital residency, and to fully participate in the programme during this time. You are welcome to develop your idea with other artists but you, as the Lead Artist, will be required to attend the full residency period.
- To present a final sharing of your new idea on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to the other artists, mentors and programme team. This could be a performance or playtest of your idea or

a presentation or discussion about your progress. If you are working with other artists to develop your idea, they are welcome to attend this final session.

- To provide a biography and image of yourself for the purposes of marketing the IPTL.
- To take part in evaluation of the IPTL programme, including surveys, discussions with the Upstart Theatre team, and video or audio recordings if applicable.
- To acknowledge our support. All artists retain creative control and intellectual property rights to the work they create for the International Playable Theatre Lab. You will be required to credit any future iterations of the work with 'Originally supported by Upstart Theatre, Teatro al Cubo and MI Film as part of the International Playable Theatre Lab'.

## **WHO CAN APPLY**

All artists selected for the International Playable Theatre Lab must be based in either Mexico or North Macedonia, but you can be based anywhere within these countries to apply.

The IPTL will be conducted in English, and therefore proficient English language skills are essential in order to take part in the programme.

As a fully digital programme, you will need access to a laptop or computer, a webcam and microphone (the ones built into your computer will be fine) and a good internet connection

during the residency weeks. If this presents any issues for you, please get in touch to chat with the team before applying.

Upstart Theatre is committed to tackling barriers to progression in the arts, and to building a programme that supports a diverse cohort of artists. As such, we will seek to ensure that some of the selected artists are from background which are typically underrepresented in the arts, including but not limited to:

- working, under, or benefit class artists;
- LGBTQ+ artists;
- artists of colour or who are from a minority ethnic background;
- artists who are disabled and / or whose day-to-day activities are limited by a long-term health condition or illness.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

### **Application Form**

Applications for the International Playable Theatre Lab must be submitted [via this Google Form](#). Answers to the application questions may be submitted in a written, video or audio format. A word document with the application questions can be downloaded from our website to prepare your answers offline.

We would like to stress that we're not expecting artists to spend a long time preparing their applications. The International Playable Theatre Lab is about the development of new work and learning about the intersections of digital

and playable theatre, and as such, we're looking for potential first and foremost, and are not expecting fully-formed explanations of how your show will work or the mechanics that make it playable - that's what the development process is for.

Our suggested word limits are a rough guide. We haven't included word limits in the form in order to save applicants the time spent cutting out just a few words to fit the box. It's okay if your answer is under or a little over, but please don't exceed this excessively.

### **Shortlisting**

We'll aim to shortlist between 8 and 12 applicants, half from Mexico and half from North Macedonia. We'll ensure that our shortlist of applicants includes representation of artists from underrepresented groups, in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Shortlisted artists will be invited to a 30-minute Zoom interview with a panel made up of at least one representative from Upstart Theatre, and at least one representative from either Teatro al Cubo (for applicants based in Mexico) or MI Film (for applicants based in North Macedonia). The interview questions will be sent to all shortlisted artists in advance to allow you to prepare.

### **How your application will be assessed**

Your application will be read by at least one member of Upstart Theatre's team, which includes Artistic Director Tom Mansfield, Executive Producer Emma Sampson and Producer

Hannah Tookey, and by at least one member of either Teatro al Cubo or MI Film (depending on where you are based). The full panel will have completed Implicit Bias tests and will be following guidelines recommended by BIFA for taking unconscious bias into account when assessing applications. The 'diversity and monitoring information' will be separated from your application before it is assessed. However, the information provided in the 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy' section of the application form may be used at the shortlisting and final commissioning stage to ensure that we are selecting a diverse cohort of artists.

Your application will be judged in relation to the criteria listed in the 'What are we looking for?' section above and will be rated for each of these on a sliding scale.

Feedback will be provided to all applicants if requested, whether or not you are shortlisted.

## **QUESTIONS & FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you'd like to know more about the International Playable Theatre Lab or have questions about applying, the development process, or access requirements, please contact Producer Hannah Tookey at [hannah.tookey@upstart-theatre.co.uk](mailto:hannah.tookey@upstart-theatre.co.uk).