

# NEW WRITING FESTIVAL

We're so glad you can join us as our graduating students on this year's MA Drama Writing programme reveal their talent, craft and imagination to the professional world. These staged readings of seven gripping excerpts from compelling new full-length plays - and one specially-written collaborative short play - are each a unique invitation to experience the excitement of possibility. Our aim is for each graduate to step into the drama writing industry with a new script that reflects their passions and perspectives on the world today, and which attract future artistic teams who can realise the work for its full potential. We invite you to imagine how and where these diverse contemporary stories will go next.

## Production Team

**Production Manager** Steve O'Brien†  
**Production Supervisor** Bryony Rutter†  
**Stage Manager** Iona Hicks  
**Deputy Stage Managers** Joe Collins & Zoe Del Carlo  
**Assistant Stage Managers** Martha Hulme, Leo Palmer, Izzy Phillips, Jack Morris, Lydia Tricks  
**LX Designer** Ellie Gendall  
**LX Programmer** Sam Stacey

**LX Operator** Ellie Beddell-Garner  
**Sound Designers** Frankie Brown & Jacob Manston  
**Sound Operators** Frankie Brown & Jacob Manston  
**Movement Support** Joël Daniel†  
**Voice Support** Rebecca Daltry†  
**Music Support** Jonathan Grosberg†  
**Head of Writing** David Lane†

## SPECIAL THANKS

The company extend their thanks to Jesse Dunbar, Oliver Hatfield, Noah Lukehurst, Jamie de Villiers & Nadia Kamalli

† BOVTS staff

## JESSIE MILLSON

"I want to build spaces and projects in which political theatre is allowed to say what it really means, but I also think we often have to be sarcastic, sadistic, or downright silly in order to do this. This means I am often tongue in cheek, but am certainly not biting my tongue. My writing is always queer, as I am a queer writer. I want to make queer theatre, but I don't want to vocalise that, I just want to let the characters' queerness exist and, whenever possible, let that exist with joy and freedom. I also write extremely political narratives, as I am a political person, but I allow politics to seep through the cracks of odd, often unbelievable situations. I am writing in a time that is comically cruel, so why shouldn't my plays be the same?"



Jessie Millson is a Bristol and London-based writer, whose past work includes *Options* at Tobacco Factory Theatres, as part of SPARK Festival. The play is now in development and explores in which spaces queer love feels safe or dangerous. Other writing work includes *Pressure Cooker* - a medical drama about a night out from hell - which toured to London and Edinburgh, where it was enjoyed by a sold-out audience after being banned in Bristol following uproar from the University of Bristol's Medical Faculty.

## HARDLY WORKING

*Hardly Working* asks whether we can find a future with someone of the opposite class, with a side serving of sass and sapphic satire. Charity and Lois, in a long-term relationship with each other and the bar they work at, are blasted through the imbalances that drove them apart. Their fallout questions whether love is controlled by class, and asks 'what happens when the patriarchy walks into a bar?'

We begin the play hoping that Charity's privilege might be able to pull Lois out of this place, but it's not that easy, and we leave the theatre wondering whether Lois is more controlled by fear of the future, or the perpetuation of their past.

**Writer** Jessie Millson  
**Director** Lydia Scott Johnson

### Cast

**LOIS** Lily Simpkins  
**CHARITY** Violet Morris  
**MARTIN** George Lorimer

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

References to sex, swearing, violence

SCAN TO VIEW MORE



FROM THIS WRITER

## LOLA ANNESLEY

Lola is a playwright from South London whose work combines abstract ideas with comedic realism to explore questions about loneliness, human connection, and the desire for love. Her work centres on the female experience, using the humanness of rage, darkness, desire and comedy to voice her characters and put them at the centre of their own stories.



In 2023 Lola took her play *Ophelia* to Edinburgh Fringe - a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* from Ophelia's perspective, exploring female coming of age, the silencing of women's anger and the deletion of female characters from the canon. She has since written a short screenplay telling the story of three women waiting in an abortion clinic, and a dark comedy about the breakdown of a relationship following a proposal.

Since starting the MA in Drama Writing, Lola has experimented with storytelling modes, combining her love for naturalistic dialogue with expressionistic worlds and forms. Psychoanalytic theory has influenced a lot of her work, allowing her to access characters' multifaceted layers through intimate, poetic monologue. She has recently become interested in clowning practice as a form of expression within her own writing and in *I Think I Am Going To Die (oh well)*, using this to explore the search for vulnerability through play.

## I THINK I AM GOING TO DIE (OH WELL)

In a living room stuffed full of newspapers, Woman sits in her chair and searches desperately for a past that has slipped from her grasp. Sifting through mountains of paper and only hours from her death, she is ready to give up on it all when Girl suddenly arrives.

Persuasive, infuriating, impish and playful, she explodes Woman's world outwards, disrupting the reality she has come to know. As the two enter into a new realm of imagination, the past begins to chase them, sending Woman on a journey that forces her to confront everything she has spent the past forty years running away from.

**Writer** Lola Annesley  
**Director** Anna Whealing

### Cast

**WOMAN** Tesni Richards  
**GIRL** Emily Hurst

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

Death, illness, grief, violence, abuse

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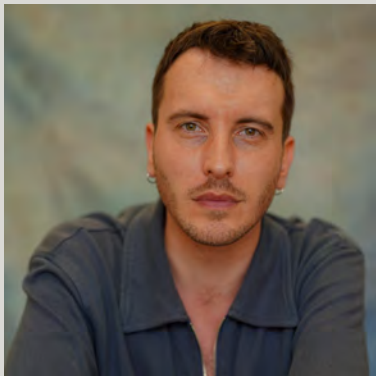


FROM THIS WRITER

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## JONATHAN MASSEY

Jonathan Massey is a writer from New Zealand, now based in Bristol. His punkish adaptation of *Just William's Luck*, first performed with Underbelly at The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, toured theatres across the UK and Europe; garnering such five-star critical praise: "A junkyard *War Horse*... Faultless family entertainment" (The List).



A hands-on researcher, his short work *Effin'*, set in a church belltower, was commissioned at The Norwich Arts Centre. For this, Jonathan attempted to learn change ringing, a process that resulted in mostly rope burn, but informed the patterns and hearts of the play's characters. Jonathan's screenplay, a kiwi-western *The Last Hurrah of Pete and the Kūmara Ceteran*, was honoured at the 2022 Watersprite Film Festival. He was also the 2023 recipient of The Snoo Wilson Prize for *Leave a Part of Yourself Here*, a play about a community-led cafe pushed to drastic means during the pandemic, judged by Steve Waters and HighTide.

If BOVTS has taught Jonathan anything, it's that if a question is there, it can spark a story. Eternally curious, his next projects range from a prison art exhibition, to an expectant mother binging on bird faeces. He's always eager to meet more collaborators.

## A VISIT

After a chilling police report, a young couple grapple with the actions of their seven-year-old son. Ria, a blunted social worker, is sent to assess his homelife.

But as the circumstances are unpicked, so too is Ria's very reality, as she comes to discover that this child is beyond any earthly understanding.

Drawn from Euripides' *The Bacchae*, this visceral new take on the age-old tragedy asks when our judgement counts for everything, what is the right thing to do when every option feels so unnatural?

**Writer** Jonathan Massey  
**Director** Helen Morley

### Cast

**RIA KELVEDON** Ellie Spooner  
**TRACY RODEN** Sam Thompson  
**IVY RODEN** Maiya Thapar  
**BEN RODEN** Josh Hogan

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

References to the social care system, strong language, references to sexual abuse and domestic violence

SCAN TO VIEW MORE



FROM THIS WRITER

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## MORGAN GOODFELLOW

Morgan is a writer based in Cumbria. She started playwriting at the age of fourteen with her first play *Throne* being performed at her local theatre. A recent graduate of Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance at University of York, she has written, directed and produced several plays which have been performed around the North of England.



Over the years, Morgan has fallen in love with writing dark comedies that explore the injustices of the world. Her play *The Goddess of Vesta* delved into the real-life experiences of Kumaris - young girls who are forced to become goddesses - asking why young women need to sacrifice their rights for religion. Morgan would like to develop this play for a UK tour in the future.

She is also writing a TV pilot script *The Farm Show*, an authentic story about Cumbria that explores loneliness, masculinity and change. Using her past experiences, Morgan is eager to write a story personal to her and is looking for collaborators. Morgan has enjoyed her time at BOVTS finding her true voice and confidence. In the next few years, she wants to expand her skills and learn more about film and radio.

## CLUB PENGUIN

"There is nothing I can do."

Everything has been breaking apart for too long now. But then again, maybe it hasn't. In a melancholy cafe three young adults shut the world out to play their favourite childhood game: Club Penguin.

While everything crumbles around them, Kira, Adam and Doody teeter on the edge of their own personal disasters, clinging on to a time where everything was a little bit easier. This urgent, funny and sharp-edged play asks why young adults use nostalgia to escape their problems, exploring how we can keep optimistic in a chaotic world and find a way to 'Waddle On!'.

**Writer** Morgan Goodfellow  
**Director** Alyssa Wint

### Cast

**ADAM** Jamie Dennison  
**DOODY** Ebube Chukwuma  
**KIRA** Emaan Durrani  
**SUNFLOWER7** Ellie Carnaby  
**ICY436** Tyler Pringle  
**ZOLD4THIS** Isaac Green

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

Self-harm, grief, violence, mentions of suicide

SCAN TO VIEW MORE



FROM THIS WRITER

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## A 20 MIN INTERVAL WILL FOLLOW

## COLLABORATIVE WRITING

This short play has been specially written for this year's New Writing Festival and was collaboratively conceived, written, dramaturged and edited by the seven graduating writers under the guidance of the MA Drama Writing course leader, and with the support of director Jon-Luke Goodman and the BA Professional Acting second year students.

Collaborative practical learning sits at the heart of Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. These collaborations occur across courses, with visiting professionals, with our in-house staff and with one another. On occasion they outlive the School, and go on to form the basis of future companies and artistic partnerships.

This 15-minute piece began in January 2024 as a conversation about instincts. What felt important to explore now? What forms felt possible for a short play with seven writers? Multiple scenarios were explored, but the theme of betrayal - personal, social, ideological and cultural - connected itself to one highly-charged fictional event that also felt all too common in reality. We knew from the outset that a short play couldn't solve the problem of male-perpetrated violence against women. What it could do was illustrate the betrayals that might perpetuate such events, invite an audience to consider them more deeply, and provoke conversations about where the solutions might begin.

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ABOUT OUR MA COURSE

## A GIRL WALKS INTO A...

A Girl. A walk home. A story. Another story. And another one.

Who do you trust when the world won't tell the truth? Who do you listen to when everything becomes confused? And how do you keep walking home when there's no promise you'll get there?

Following the murder of a woman in Bristol, various people gather to tell their stories. Laying down raw emotion from a cacophony of voices, this short play tackles heavy themes and harsh characters to fully emphasise the terror of threats both real and imagined.

**Writers** Lola Annesley, Millie Haldane, Morgan Goodfellow, Jonathan Massey, Jessie Millson, Lucy Watson, Nelly Weston  
**Director** Jon-Luke Goodman

### Cast

**GIRL/EX-FRIEND/MOTHER** Ellie Carnaby  
**FLATMATE** Tamzin Khan  
**POLICE OFFICER** Maiya Thapar  
**THAT GUY SHE DATED** Jass Beki  
**DAD** Tyler Pringle  
**CHORUS** The Ensemble

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

Reference to rape, abduction, male-perpetrated violence, death and grief, reference to violent pornography

## LUCY WATSON

Lucy's writing is driven by a desire to get audiences thinking about the world in a new way, crafting narrative situations that challenge our ideas of nation, identity and belonging. Deeply inspired by the function of theatre as transport into other worlds, Lucy's writing explores the magical, theatrical and multi-sensory aspects of storytelling.

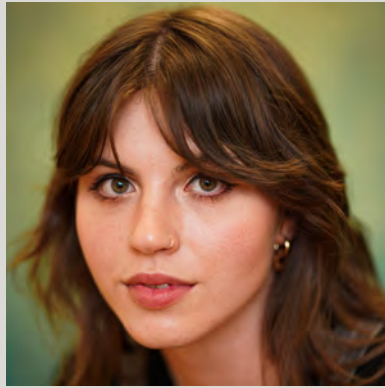


This MA has offered her a valuable chance to explore the functions and mechanisms of musical theatre, using this heightened, playful, and often self-reflexive framework to probe how the pursuit of utopian dreams might lead to a dystopian nightmare. Fascinated by the dialogic integration of story, music, language, dance and spectacle, Lucy's work is highly collaborative. Over the course of this year, she has begun to explore the transferable aspects of these skills into other interactive grand narratives, such as video games.

Based in Wiltshire, she graduated with an MA in English Literature from Edinburgh University, where she wrote, directed and produced numerous plays for the Edinburgh Fringe. Her play on modern art won her a place on the Dramaturg programme at the American Repertory Theatre. She plays in a band, runs drama workshops for young people and supports young musicians in finding tuition and playing in bands.

## NELLY WESTON

Nelly is a queer-feminist playwright and artist from Birmingham creating work that is introspective, textural, haunting and playful, and provides voice to the under-represented. They enjoy working with ensembles and using a combination of expressive physicality and punchy, witty dialogue to walk the line between the ethereal and the tragic, the silent and the screaming.



She graduated with a first class degree in Drama from the University of Exeter, where she was the Artistic Director of new writing theatre society Theatre with Teeth and wrote her first play *Me, Myself, Myself, Myself* - a playful, vibrant piece exploring depression and self-isolation, and produced at fringe festival Make-Tank Mini-Fest in 2021. She is currently writing *Sappho Could've Bathed Here* in Bristol, a theatre and community project generating a sapphic eco-system to fight loneliness and the under-representation of queer women and non-binary characters through Sappho's poetry, magical-realism and quick-witted comedy. Nelly is now looking forward to extending her practice to screenwriting, adapting the same project for a TV sitcom and adapting her short play *No Scrumping* into a feminist folk-horror film short.

## LEVEL UP! A MUSICAL

*Level Up!* is a musical comedy, following Jo and his two flatmates as they attempt to make their fortunes launching a crypto currency. Based on real events, this story charts the rise and fall of this trio, from well-meant beginnings to heady success and eventual downfall. Set amidst the heightened buzz of high finance and online gaming, this musical leans into the crazier aspects of crypto and NFTs, but asks more serious questions of our relationship with the virtual and the real.

Blending retro-futuristic beats, old-school swing and catchy 8bit vintage gaming beats, the music blends the escapist nature of games with old world pressures of 'making it'. It asks to what extent we are the products of the age we live in: are we the players in our games or are we being played?

**Book and Lyrics** Lucy Watson  
**Music** Julian Kirk  
**Director** Patrick Wilson

### Cast

**JO** Tom Brace-Jenkins  
**BOBBY** Spike Maxwell  
**RAFF/DAD** George Usher  
**MUM** Ellie Spooner  
**HUMPHREY** Isaac Green  
**ENSEMBLE** Lotte Pearl

**CONTENT ADVISORIES**  
Swearing

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FROM THIS WRITER

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## DREGS

Atop a crumbling cliffside, a house teeters on the edge of collapse. In a bid to prevent the inevitable, its sole occupant Jen hauls it back with boat chains, before her sister and nephew arrive unexpectedly to throw her whole existence out of balance. Meanwhile at the foot of the cliff, a mysterious community of beachcombers gather: less concerned about the cliff's collapse, than they are about the secrets locked inside it...

A sinister and expressive exploration of the compulsions that shape our grief, *Dregs* takes coastal folklore and the climate crisis as its backdrop and asks how we should process the past, if we should hope for better or let go, and what really happens when you let the cliff fall from under you.

**Writer** Nelly Weston  
**Director** Belle Streeton

### Cast

**JEN** Sasha McCabe  
**EMMA** Tamzin Khan  
**BEACHCOMBERS**  
Spike Maxwell  
Lotte Pearl  
Jass Beki

**CONTENT ADVISORIES**  
Grief, strong language

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FROM THIS WRITER

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## MILLIE HALDANE

Millie is a writer from Glasgow whose work is intimate, searching and lyrical, pulling raw emotional depth from characters and stories. Her first plays were kitchen-sink naturalism, playing with witty dialogue and exploring everyday themes of desire, belonging and loneliness. Her nine-part anthology of monologues for pub performance, *Scratchings*, enjoyed sold-out runs at St Andrews University, the 2023 Edinburgh Fringe (5\* Theatre Scotland) and various Bristol venues. On her journey through the MA in Drama Writing, her work has taken a more expressive turn, employing poetic and lyrical language to spotlight bold and searing female-led narratives.



*An Elegy For a Spaceman* mixes all of her writing passions, using various theatrical forms in conjunction with natural, funny dialogue to create a kaleidoscopic yet intimate story of masculinity, longing and grief. Millie enjoys having many projects on the go and is currently working on a one-woman show about street harassment and the snowball effects of trauma, as well as an abstract poetry-style piece connecting femininity and birds, which is written specifically for Temple Church, Bristol. She also greatly enjoys dramaturgy, and is seeking to continue with this following her studies at BOVTS.

## AN ELEGY FOR A SPACEMAN

Glasgow. A funeral. 23rd January 2024. Euan's back from his first term at Cambridge for an unexpected reunion with his best pals Chris, Oli and Bacon. It's been six months since they've seen each other. It's been six months since they've spoken about anything. After today, it could be a lifetime before they're really ready to talk.

Multi-roling through past, present and future in a cascade of stories about sex, parties, drugs and mayhem, this play collides high-tempo storytelling, dynamic physical theatre and chest-bursting emotion, laying bare the raw experience of Scottish masculinity and asking how far four friends will go to avoid the truth of what lies dead before them. Glasgow's freezing this time of year, but the church is even colder.

**Writer** Millie Haldane  
**Director** Jacob Whitehorn

### Cast

**BACON** Kieran Devine  
**CHRIS** George Usher  
**EUAN** George Lorimer  
**OLI** Peter Devlin

### CONTENT ADVISORIES

Vulgar language, homophobia, mention of death, implication of suicide, sexual content, implication of grooming, implication of sexual assault, mention of blood

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FROM THIS WRITER

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## GIVE IT A GO!

### Introduction to Playwriting



The Introduction to Playwriting short course is designed as a fast-paced introduction to the craft of writing for live performance. Whether you've already had a go at writing a play or you are just looking to build the confidence to put pen to paper, this course can support you in your development as a writer.

Wed 11 – Fri 13 Sep, Downside Road | Fee: £340

Please visit [oldvic.ac.uk/short-courses](http://oldvic.ac.uk/short-courses) to register.

## ELEVATE YOUR CAREER

### Drama Writing (MA)



Drama Writing at BOVTS is designed to nurture you in finding your distinctive voice as a drama writer. The course aims to be innovative in its approach, by immersing you within the whole theatre portfolio, while developing transferable skills to write for screen and audio.

Applications for full-time training from Sep 2025 will be opening on 1 Sep 2024. For further details, please visit [oldvic.ac.uk/course/ma-drama-writing](http://oldvic.ac.uk/course/ma-drama-writing).