

RISING :

LIVE Q&A TRANSCRIPT

1 JUNE 2020

ONLINE Q&A WITH CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

PREPARED BY: RISING

A CALL TO ARTISTS RESOURCE

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OVERVIEW

On May 21, RISING announced [A Call to Artists](#) – an opportunity for Victorian artists, collectives and companies to submit bold and ambitious ideas for projects suited to a festival context. As well as regularly updating our [FAQs on the website](#), this livestream is designed to give applicants more insight into what RISING is about and what the assessors are looking for in submissions.

A Call to Artists submissions are due 12pm AEST, Monday 8 June. To our First Nations and culturally diverse community, we acknowledge that recent world events may have impacted your submission. Please get in touch if you need an extension askus@rising.melbourne.

TRANSCRIPT

Elevator music plays. Opening plate dissolves. Music fades.

HANNAH: I'm Hannah Fox and this is Gideon Obarzanek, and we're the Co-artistic Directors of RISING. Thanks for joining us tonight for this live Q&A about A Call to Artists.

But before we begin, I'd like to just take a moment to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work, and at which RISING will take place. And there are many countries from which we are tuning in from tonight.

We pay our respects to the Kulin Elders and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We recognise the strength, resilience and artistic endeavours of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clan groups and language groups. A key focus of RISING is to work closely with First Peoples and community to develop programming and experiences by and for First Peoples – and we hope our Call to Artists forms part of that.

We also want to welcome people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. There's live captioning on Facebook, and or who we'll be providing a downloadable transcript of the Q&A on our website. And for people who are blind, who have low vision, I'm a white woman with very bright orange hair. And Gideon is a white man in a shirt and jacket. And we're seated on a sofa with an exposed brick wall behind us and some large indoor plants, looking very much like we're hosting Rage on a Saturday night.

GIDEON: To start with tonight, we thought it would be useful for the two of us to go over what RISING is exactly, and provide you, as artists, some of the themes we're thinking about and the vision we have for the festival. So, RISING really is an extraordinary new Arts and Culture Festival for the Asia Pacific region here in Melbourne at the beginning of winter. It will be June the 26th, 2021.

HANNAH: May 26th.

GIDEON: May 26th? It will be May 26th, of course, till June the 6th. May 2021. And it really, as a festival, it brings together a whole lot of things from in-venue type of shows, but also very much focusing on outdoor works, places and ways of bringing communities together, into ways of ephemeral experiences of like ritual and performance. There is also, and maybe you can talk a little bit more about that as well?

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HANNAH : Yeah, sure. So, when we started, we really tried to think about how we can add to what is available in Melbourne, as opposed to just aggregating the sum of its parts. So really looking at trying to create experiences that are quite extraordinary, that don't happen all year round. Because really consider festivals that, they're kind of marriage of community ceremony, cultural display and counterculture. And that really means that the social is as important as the artistic elements.

So, I think, when we were putting together this Call to Artists, we were thinking about how to direct the assessment panel about what we're looking for. And part of that was really about embedding accessibility in the curation. That's not just down to marketing. That it's really about placement and pricing, and invitation and participation. So, it's a very core part of what we're trying to achieve at the program.

GIDEON : I should also say that RISING also is a replacement of Melbourne International Arts Festival and White Night Melbourne.

HANNAH : So, we're gonna move into the FAQ pretty quickly. But I might just explain why we're doing this. Partly it's about giving access to artists who are applying-- direct access to us to be able to have that conversation, ask any questions you like, 'cos that's not always easy to access a festival like ours and have a direct conversation.

So, I'd really encourage you to ask any question you like, but we're probably most useful on answering questions around the creative ideas. But if you have technical questions, we'll also be answering those in the comment sections. So, if you're streaming from Facebook, YouTube or Instagram, you can just comment in below. Or if it's easy, you can text into 0427-041-896. And the number is also displayed in the caption, the first comment on each of those channels. So, shall we kick off, do you wanna kick off the first question?

GIDEON : Yeah, so the first question we've got is, **"what do you mean by a 'festival context'? How can I address this in my application?"**

So, I can begin by saying, when we say festival context, we're not really talking about necessarily-- We're actually talking about the things that can happen within a festival, and that will be more difficult, let's say, or less relevant outside of that. So, things that, you know, Melbourne has an all-year-round, seven nights a week, great cultural landscape, and we are really looking for things that can change that landscape for two weeks of the year and become really pivotal to that.

So maybe you would want to consider how the audience engages with that, what time that is, what kind of place that takes, and how does something that we take as normal shift in that context and really becomes part of that ephemeral nature of what is a festival.

HANNAH : Yeah, I would just add to that that, you know, festivals are really about reflecting time and place. Or in my opinion, anyway. And that's what we'd be looking for in applications that really do speak to that kind of question.

But also, the other thing that's helpful for us to understand is how a broader public might engage with it. And a big part of that is sitting either in public space or repurposed space or ways that immediately encourage engagement with the community. So that's quite different, I guess, to the all-year-round, as Gideon said, you know, cultural institution. Yeah, I hope that answers the question.

GIDEON : Also, when we say festival, very often, it's not a singular experience. When you go to see a work or you're part of an experience. It's usually part of a longer night, or part of a greater experience. So that might not be relevant actually to an application, but maybe something you might wanna think about when you think about kind of where it sits, and the time it is, and how that engages with people.

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HANNAH: The next question we've got is, **"where will the festival take place, and can ideas be for outside of the Melbourne CBD?"**

Obviously, one of the things we wanna do, this Call to Artists, is to actually be really responsive to what comes in, and to not completely lock down the festival's footprint and program before we've gone through these applications that are coming in, because we want this to be artist-led and to be informed by that process.

But I think it's pretty safe to say that we will have a large footprint in the Melbourne CBD. We are looking at how we can use the assets of the city and really amplify and augment what's already here. But we're also really looking at Greater Melbourne and regional as well for key projects. So, there'll be a couple of satellite projects that sit outside of the city and further afield. So, if your idea relates to something very specific outside of the CBD, that absolutely wouldn't disclude it. And I think it would be worthwhile including where you see your concept, as part of the application. 'Cos that will help inform us about how to stitch it together into the broader program. Is there anything you wanna add?

GIDEON: Yeah, no. I mean, that's right. Here's a question: **"I'm part of a collective who is submitting an application. Can I apply as an individual as well?"**

No, I don't think so. But I will refer to our producers. We're basically--

HANNAH: I'm gonna counteract you on this one.

GIDEON: Okay. You go and then I'll go, I'll counteract that possibly.

HANNAH: We're gonna have a live argument. Basically, there's one lead artist on each application, or representative of a company. So, if you're the lead name on that application, then you can't put another application in as a lead artist. But you can be a part of another collective. So sorry to contradict you.

GIDEON: No, you don't contradict me because, actually you know, it is a bit confusing. It's a good question because I do think that-- So there are plenty of companies or co-ops or collectives that want to apply as a group. And I think you can apply as that collective, but we do require a single name as a point of contact for that company or for that collective. And once that single name is down for that collective, you can't then apply as an individual outside of that. But you can be in somebody else's project, let's say, in a different role. But not the applicant of another project. How's that for meeting you halfway?

HANNAH: That's good. Yeah! Okay so another question is, **"is it better to submit my proposal in video or in writing? What should I put in my video?"**

It's really up to each individual about what's most comfortable for them. But I would say from my own experience of talking to artists and reading proposals a lot, that often, you really get a very good sense of the project really quickly when it's a direct address from an artist.

One of the good examples of that is the [Australian Performing Arts Market](#), when they do the pitch sessions and, you know, when you just really hear directly from an artist, in spoken, what their idea is, it does tend to really translate quite quickly in a way that's difficult in words. Even though in words, it might be more perfectly formed and laid out. So, I'd really encourage people to apply via video. And you can interweave those videos with images and that sort of thing. But really what we wanna hear is the essence of the idea. So absolutely up to you, but I wouldn't shy away from video, because it can be very compelling even if it's not perfect.

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GIDEON: And we really put those two formats up for people, just to make it easy as possible. So, whatever you're most-- Whatever you feel most comfortable with, we're pretty good with it...

"Can producers and curators apply, or just artists?"

We were discussing that earlier today. We have put the word artists as the people who can apply. We have a pretty broad definition of what we mean by artists. Which is far wider than someone painting in their garret. So yes, absolutely curators and producers can apply. But it's really about the idea. I mean we're really just interested in good ideas. So, I'd say that's the case.

HANNAH: Yeah and I think if a producer is coming up with an idea that involves a whole lot of artists, and as a whole, becomes one complete project, that's probably gonna be more successful than a really expansive curatorial theme across multiple venues and outcomes. So, we're not looking for programming streams, I guess. We're really looking for projects and for singular ideas. And whether they come from a producer, a director, or multiple artists or collectives, any of those is absolutely fine.

GIDEON: And to be honest, you don't need to be an artist or a producer. You really don't need to be qualified to put in an idea.

HANNAH: True. Do you want me to read this one?

GIDEON: Yeah, you can.

HANNAH: So next question is, "is there any preference towards venue-based or open-air performances?"

I would say no. We're really open to whatever best suits the idea and the work. I guess, in this particular environment, that we are looking at public space probably more so, even more so than we were before. And we were looking at that heavily before.

I would say, open air in winter can be challenging. And we have to really consider what's actually viable. But similarly, right now, venues are challenging. But really, our role is to figure out how to present this work and the artist, and we're not really looking for artists to solve those problems for us in terms of location, stitching together a program, social distancing, any of those things. What we really wanna hear is just the essence of the idea and then it's our job to kind of figure out how it all fits together and how the outcome actually happens.

GIDEON: I would encourage people who are thinking about doing works in venues, to possibly think about indoor spaces that aren't necessarily venues. Or maybe offer a different experience to what is normal for that art form, just to be able to be sensitised to something that is happening within the context of RISING.

HANNAH: Yep. What's the next question? Okay, so: "I love the emphasis on night-time in your vision. However, can we propose things that happen during the day as well?"

GIDEON: No.

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HANNAH: I second that.

GIDEON: Thanks. Well actually, things at twilight or sunrise--

HANNAH: Either end of the night-time, yeah. But we really do need to have some parameter on what we're doing.

GIDEON: And we do have some leniency when it comes to, let's say, work for young people, very young people. We'll take some exceptions. But yeah, nah...

"White Night is obviously a projection-based art experience. Are you wanting artists to propose something different to that type of experience?"

HANNAH: I would say that, well really, one of the key things we're looking at is participation and engagement. And I know those are kind of art sector buzz words, but I guess we're not so much looking for that large scale spectacle where thousands of people can walk past it and sort of look at it fleetingly and get something out of it.

We're really looking for those experiences that really ask the public to either be involved or to really stay with it and have some kind of deeper engagement. So, it doesn't mean that projection is out, it absolutely isn't, we're presenting a lot of video works, I think. But that's not the basis of what we're looking for. Anything to add to that?

GIDEON: No.

HANNAH: "Are you wanting work that is performed each evening? When you say Melbourne-specific but also applicable to other festivals, do you mean there should be a process that is able to be locations-specific?"

GIDEON: Look, it's a good question because the criteria was quite contradictory, I think in this sense. We are looking for things that are Melbourne-specific. But we are also looking for works that can be done again in another city.

So if it's applicable, let's say, to a political building, and it's relationship is the politics to that building, is there a similar building of that nature in another city that that same relationship would apply to, is I guess what we're saying in relation to that. And the reason behind that is that we can go into co-productions and co-presentations with partners in Australia and internationally, with an idea or a concept that can shift from city to city, but essentially the concept itself remains very steadfast to what it means socially. I don't know if that explains it.

HANNAH: Yeah, I think it does. Well, I hope it does. I think we're hoping to support works that can travel and respond to sites and communities. And whether that's Melbourne or another city, we wanna support works that will have a life beyond our festival.

And just to answer the first part of your question as well, having a performance every single night of the festival is not a necessary criterion at all. It could be a one-off for an event, or it could be something that actually runs beyond our festival dates.

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GIDEON: Yep.

HANNAH: Do you wanna read out that one?

GIDEON: Yep. **"When it comes to site activation, do you have designated sites that are already in your thoughts? Infrastructure is often the biggest cost for site-specific work, and I wonder if there are sites that you could share your interest for activation."**

HANNAH: Yeah, I can answer this. It's pretty early days 'cos as I said before, we wanna be responsive to this process. But we absolutely have been looking at the river quite heavily, which is broadly out there, so we can talk about it. We really were interested in the Birrarung, as a major spine of the city, as a cultural ancestor, and as a place for coming together, you know, that really kind of defines Melbourne. And so that is the spot that we are looking at quite closely, and not just in Southbank, we're looking at that eventually, all the way out to Yarra Valley. So that's a very key site for us.

I guess, other than that, it's all pretty open at the moment. And I absolutely take your point on infrastructure being a huge cost for site-specific work, and we will be looking to try and share resources and to amalgamate, no, amalgamate is the wrong word, but bring together a few works in a location.

GIDEON: I would say if your work requires a lot of infrastructure, then maybe think about the river and the CBD, and we can kind of help with that. I think if you're thinking about a work that requires a lot of infrastructure, but it's somewhere very specific out in Greater Melbourne, then that would be more a challenge, possibly more of a challenge for us to support it. So, things that, the further out they are-- Oh actually, that's not true. I mean we could-- It depends on the idea, really. But you know, in a city of close to five million people, we can't spread this festival out that completely everywhere and anywhere. So, we will be focusing around the river and the city to begin with, and then working our way out.

HANNAH: Which follows onto the next question: "Is it just Melbourne as a location or is regional Victoria an option also?"

It's absolutely an option. And I think the likelihood is that we'll do one or two key projects in regional Victoria each year. And that is really, we wanna be able to do really significant extraordinary works in this to a scale. So, we will be supporting those sorts of projects, but it will be less of a kind of a scattergun programming across the whole state. And we'll focus on one spot each year, to really just trying to achieve something to the scale that we wanna present.

And that's completely open. We have no requirements around particular locations in regional Victoria or Greater Melbourne. And I think the likelihood is the festival will end up being 70–80% in the city, and 20–30% elsewhere. That's kind of the split of what we're looking at. But once again, it's very much up in the air at the moment.

GIDEON: **"Can we involve aspects of food and beverage into our ideas as part of the artwork's experience?"**

Yes, absolutely, in fact we encourage it. And that's really the delineation between a festival experience and, let's say, you know, all year-round possible cultural experience. That it is a larger complete experience. So, we love to consider what people experience from the minute they leave their front door, arrive, what they do afterwards, and go back home at the end of the night or in the beginning of the morning. So, everything that's wrapped around that, is something that we take an interest in.

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HANNAH: I think also, you know, been thinking about food as a real cultural gateway and a way that people do often interact with cultures that are not their own. And so, looking at food and beverage from a cultural perspective is something we're very interested in, as opposed to just purely commercial.

Sure, so, next question is, **"could you further expand on your commissioning and co-producing model?"**

It's fairly new so we're still developing it. But one of the main things we're looking at is, well not just looking at, we've done, we've set up a national and international curatorial team. And a big part of that thinking was not so much just bringing ideas to Melbourne but being able to be a generator for work here and having a very direct kind of pathway to take that work out to the rest of the country and the rest of the world.

In terms of the model for co-producing, it's really case-by-case. And I think as we go through this process, we'll go through the 100 or so seed-funded projects. We'll then be starting to, as we go into creative producing and creative development of those projects, looking for partnerships, whether they are presentation or venue-partners, or that sort of thing, to really help support those projects, to happen in the festival, but also to have a life beyond the festival.

GIDEON: Yeah, I should mention, too that with A Call to Artists, that once we identify the 100 shortlisted from the first round, there'll be a much larger, more comprehensive application process to that, that will be paid for by us. And the people chosen from that round will have a creative development period, which will be substantially invested in.

So regardless of whether that group, all of them make it into the festival or not, those pieces will be progressed to quite a substantial level. So, there'll be an option for any of those artists and any of those companies to then take those works and continue with them, whether they be in RISING or not. So, we believe that we'll be actually giving quite a lot of resources towards works that we may end up not being able to put on for whatever reason.

HANNAH: Next question is: **"the Melbourne International Arts Festival and White Night Melbourne, were very different offerings and for very different audiences. Where do you see your target demographic for RISING?"**

It's extremely broad. And we're not looking to replicate those two separate demographic groups and stitch them together into one thing. We are absolutely thinking a lot about who's excluded from a city-based performing arts festival, and how to reach those audiences.

That's partly why we've been so focused on public space and also doing A Call to Artists like this where we've gone extremely broad in the way that we've promoted it and talked about it, to sort of get outside of that, like not a clique, but a kind of known group of people that know how this system works and know how to do grant speak and that sort of thing. So, we've really tried to open up access to contributing to the festival as an artist, but also, as we get down the track, that access from an audience perspective as well.

So, I can't give you an age demographic or an income, but we're really looking to go as broad as possible. The point of a festival like this is, it is a service to the city, and Melbourne is a very different place to what it was 35 years ago when Melbourne International Arts Festival started. And you know, even for White Night, it spoke to a very particular audience, and didn't so much speak to an international audience, I would say.

GIDEON: Hm.

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HANNAH: Which is something that we hope to do.

GIDEON: I mean, we really want this to be an honest reflection, an inspiration, of what Melbourne is now. And Melbourne is a whole number of things actually. It's a very diverse city, it's a very progressive city, it's a very creative city, and we do see that essentially culture is the narration of who we are, and how we understand ourselves. And so, everyone is a part of that. That culture is not just for a select group of people. Actually, everyone is a part of it. It is essential in that sense. And so, we approach it in that broad way.

And that's not to mean that the works, experience, are shallow and they're just trying to entertain people as easily as possible, but it is about presenting and producing works that a whole number of people can engage with, regardless of their experience within arts and culture. And I think that if we go back to Melbourne International Arts Festival and White Night, we kind of had this sort of the two ends of that spectrum in a way, and we're really wanting to find a, really a new place, or how to talk about it, and how to make it work.

HANNAH: Yeah, and I think to really help drive home that point of accessibility and depth and integrity, you don't have to be mutually exclusive. That's really the core of what we're trying to do.

The next question is, **"how much should we be thinking about the ramifications of COVID-19, social distancing, touching materials, et cetera? Or are you just interested in the idea, and work all that out later as things unfold?"**

GIDEON: This is a really good question. And look, it's something that we as festival directors, are scenario planning all the time. And we've got a whole number of festivals rolling around in our heads. But in many respects, that's sort of our job. And we don't want people to get too caught up in anticipating what might be, you know, what they have to prepare for. Because it's very difficult to tell what's gonna be possible in 12 months' time.

But having said that, we are kind of as a festival, and potential people who are applying to the festival, in a unique position to be thinking about what is that experience, how does the public engage with your work, and I wouldn't over-stress and over-strain thinking about it. But it can be something that you might wanna think about. What is that experience and how could it function?

HANNAH: And yeah, if you have that answer, we'd love to hear it. Don't be shy. Do you wanna ask this one?

GIDEON: Yeah. **"Are collaborations with international artists welcome, as long as local artists are involved?"**

Yes!

HANNAH: Yes. Short answer.

GIDEON: We encourage it.

Yeah, and it's kind of an interesting time now with sovereign borders closed, and likely to be closed for quite a while. Being one of a number of international festivals, how does that function? And so, we really do encourage actually partnerships and collaborations, both around Australia and internationally.

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HANNAH: Yep. What's the next one? **"For an idea so grand that it would really need a pilot next year with full deployment in the following one, are you open to that sort of thing?"**

Yes, we are. We absolutely understand that, you know, in commissioning new work that it doesn't always meet the deadlines that we have for a festival program, and that some of the ideas that will come through this process are just gonna need the benefit of time and so we would look at putting those into 2022 or even beyond.

Our key focus is on the 2021 festival, and we want that to be as reflective of the Victorian arts and artists as possible. But yeah, also understand the process of making, and particularly I guess with performance works and the nature of how people are actually able to make work right now, conscious that that might slow things down. So, if it's not something that can be realised by 2021, that doesn't rule it out, yeah.

GIDEON: And also, if it's something that needs more time than a year, we don't even require a pilot outcome. We can acknowledge that it'll take two years to get up. And we certainly wanna do an in-house proof of concept, but yeah there's no obligation to have one iteration in '21 and then another one in '22.

HANNAH: Yeah.

GIDEON: I can't remember who read the last one?

HANNAH: I did.

GIDEON: I wanna read this one.

HANNAH: Yeah.

GIDEON: "How many projects are you expecting to have in the festival?"

HANNAH: 247.

GIDEON: We don't know. It really is a matter of scale. So, it may be only a handful of very large projects or it may be a whole big collection of small works. And we also wanna stress that A Call to Artists is not the whole festival. So, there are other aspects to the festival, but this is a major part of the program.

HANNAH: Yeah that's right, so we imagine that, just to give you some kind of ballpark that 100 might be boiled down to somewhere between 20 and 10, I think, is what we're looking at, in terms of new commissions for 2021.

GIDEON: That's pretty ambitious.

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HANNAH: Yeah, it is. But then there is the broader festival program as well, which we will be looking at other Australian artists and also international if possible.

So next question is, **"the newly defined festival runtime sits very close to Sydney's Vivid and Hobart's Dark Mofo. Would you see a conflict of interest if a single work has to be successful in RISING and another?"**

I think what you're asking is about exclusivity. And I would say to that that we were not looking for necessarily 100% exclusive content, and part of the thinking in being around that time of year is about being able to find other partners in the region for making it work. It certainly is helpful if those projects have a slightly different outcome in each place.

But I think there is a real ethical question around exclusivity for artists in this moment when they can't actually travel around the world with their works. You know, we do really partner as much as is possible, and also acknowledge that each person's [work needs] to have its own and some level of exclusivity as a matter of course, but it doesn't have to be that way. And that we really wanna partner as much as possible.

GIDEON: You know, we're very much aiming for, particularly '21, for a real Melbourne experience, for Melbourne and Victoria. And so, I don't think we care that much whether it appears elsewhere. It won't affect us greatly...

"Can you provide support to assist collaboration with Traditional Owners, especially for publicly sited projects?"

HANNAH: I can answer that one. In short, yes, we can. But obviously that is a time process. So, it's not something that we can do as part of the application process. And everything that we're doing as part of the festival needs to be in consultation with Traditional Owners.

We tend to work in a way that we would be talking to elders of this country about the festival as a whole, and, you know, key areas that we're operating in, rather than every single individual project. Unless it's particularly relevant, unless it's absolutely responding to stories and First Peoples' culture. In which case, of course, we do consultation. So that is something that we can assist with, for sure, but it's a matter of time.

Next question is, **"can existing works be adapted for the festival setting?" Do you wanna answer this one?**

GIDEON: Yes. We are aware that a lot of people's work and things in the pipeline have been really frozen and paralysed for the last number of months and will continue to be. And so, we know there's a lot of work out there that is not necessarily brand new and specifically for us. And we really do welcome those projects to be considered for this.

It is a different matter if those works have already premiered in Melbourne and have been seen here. We are encouraging productions that may be already developed to a certain degree but have not seen the light of day with the public.

HANNAH: I mean it is a commissioning program, so we are essentially looking for new projects, but they don't have to have had absolutely no development whatsoever.

GIDEON: I mean, it's also fair to say that companies, groups and individuals, can approach RISING with existing work. That happens all the time with a festival. And we have a programming team that will consider that work. But it will not be part of A Call to Artists. Oh, we're ahead of you!

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HANNAH : Yeah.

GIDEON : Writing it out. Ah still writing, we'll wait for a moment...

"How can we address this in a--" Oh a follow-on question! **"How can we address this in our application re existing works?"**

You would have to show that the work sits within the criteria of A Call to Artists, and that we are indeed commissioning a work, and not presenting an existing work.

HANNAH : Yeah, but I also-- If you do have an existing project that has had a premiere in Melbourne and that it does absolutely exist and it's not an adaptation or an iteration of that work, then we are also a presenting festival and not purely commissioning, as Gideon said. So, you can approach us with that work just as a pure presentation.

Okay, the next one. **"So, with the festival taking place approaching the winter months, outdoor programming can commence earlier in the evening. Are you conscious of, and encouraging of, the opportunity to attract young families into the CBD?"**

Yeah, we absolutely are. And the 2020 that we had devised had a very strong large-scale early evening program that was really specifically targeted at young families. We are conscious as well that winter and outdoor programming is challenging. There's no doubt about that. And we are, you know, very aware of how to make those experiences comfortable and how to design for that kind of winter festival. And we're also, you know, we'll be looking at a lot of indoor spaces. Just not necessarily exclusively traditional theatre venues.

GIDEON : Yes, and we certainly have works for children in theatre as well. So that is something that goes on in the outdoor. Yep, twilight is a really important time for us, for large scale works for families and children.

HANNAH : Or if you're very keen, 5AM.

GIDEON : Yes, kids wake up early.

HANNAH : **"Are producers aware that National Sorry Day is the Opening Night date, and are they preparing to allow the focus of Opening Night to this?"**

Yes, we're absolutely aware. And aware that our dates sit in Reconciliation Week. And that's something that we're really thinking about in how to shape the program, to be responsive to that moment in time.

And we'd just really encourage First Nations and First Peoples artists to apply, but also to understand that we will be responding to Reconciliation Week as non-indigenous people and creating programming and education around that aspect of the timing of the festival. It's very much a central focus of what we wanna do with this festival, to be relevant to its place and its time. Is there anything you wanna add?

GIDEON : No, I wholeheartedly agree. It is, and will continue to become, a major focus of the festival. We can now maybe talk amongst ourselves a little bit, while we wait any other enquiry.

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HANNAH : We've got a slight lag on questions. Got any tips while we're waiting?

GIDEON : Tips? If you wanna write, you don't have to write 300 words. That's the maximum. I'm always convinced that, you know, things can happen in even shorter words than that.

HANNAH : Yeah.

GIDEON : **"Who's eligible to apply?"**

Also, eligibility. This program is really for Victorian artists. And to qualify for that, you either have to be living in Victoria or living anywhere else in the world but have shown that you've had a substantial artistic practice within the last five years in Victoria.

And I would suggest that in your bio or CV, which is the add-on 300 words, if you are living outside of Victoria, you would have to demonstrate that through that bio, for you to proceed. And I would also say that with projects with more than one person or number of people, not everyone needs to be in Victoria. It really needs to be the applicant for the project.

HANNAH : Yeah, that's right. The next question is, **"can you explain the phases of the creative development program?"**

GIDEON : I love explaining this 'cos I feel like an old dad.

HANNAH : Okay, you go for it.

GIDEON : In the first phase, which we are in right now, as you are aware, almost anyone and everyone can apply. If you're eligible, there is an advisory panel of 10 that will look through those applications and 100 people will be selected to be invited to put in an application, a longer, more comprehensive application. And they'll be paid \$2,000 each to do that work. I think you get two weeks. It won't be too onerous; it will be pretty straightforward.

From that, that panel or members of that panel meet again. And probably anywhere between 10 to 20 will be chosen from that. And depending on the needs of each one of those projects that will go into a creative development period which will be paid for by RISING. That can take anywhere depending on what kinda project is, between a few days to six weeks, I think. And then from that, which I think takes us into September.

HANNAH : Yep.

GIDEON : And then there'll be some outcomes from that. There has to be like a proof of concept. So that can take on or a discussion or a video. It'll be something really tangible for the producing team to understand and for us to understand what that experience is going to be.

And from there, I would probably say that half of those projects probably, or what we could produce within our budget, we would produce for '21, some may go into '22. Having said that, the ones that won't be-- People on that panel are also our international curatorial consultants and our nationals. So, we'll be

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speaking with them and other people about where can some of these projects go beyond RISING or instead of RISING.

HANNAH: And that will be happening, that consultation will be happening throughout the process once we get beyond seed funding.

The next question is, **"how much detail should we provide in terms of costing? Do we need to provide a detailed project budget?"**

In this stage, no. It's really just about the idea and who you are. That's really all we need to know in this Expression of Interest round. Once we select the artist from that for the 100 seed funded projects, that's when we'll ask you for a budget. But that budget will be much more in relation to actually developing your idea, as opposed to the outcome. We have an amazing team of producers and operation people here, who can actually help to flesh out some of those ideas, and to think about more operational side of those project budgets. Okay.

GIDEON: "How would you suggest pitching big ideas that can be scaled down?"

HANNAH: No, would you suggest.

GIDEON: Oh, would you, sorry, I'm sorry. I just say what I wanted it to be. **"Would you suggest pitching big ideas that can be scaled down?"**

HANNAH: Yes.

GIDEON: Yes. I think this really is an opportunity to talk about big ideas. Very often, we're not in that position. And this is one of those times where we can. So, we will certainly encourage you to talk about big ideas. Knowing Hannah and knowing me, it's very unlikely we would ask you to scale it down.

HANNAH: Yeah, I think if this is a unique opportunity, it is a really large commissioning fund that, you know, it really is positioned on big ambitious ideas. So, it's not to say that that idea might be a one-on-one performance, and that we would probably be just as interested in that, as something for 10,000 people. So, it's not necessarily always about scale in terms of physical impact.

But I think this is an unusual opportunity to actually really put forward your biggest idea, and we can always negotiate back from there if we have to. But we would like to hear from you what you would really love to do.

Okay, the next one, **"will the festival be prioritising theatre-based works, or will there be space for other mediums to be presented?"**

It's absolutely gonna be a very big mix. We are looking at all forms. And I would say that theatre-based works will make up one part of that program, but it's absolutely not the majority. We're also looking at a really, beyond this commissioning process, and as part of it, a really large music program, visual arts that sit in public space, live art, dance works, site-specific performance. We're really open even to digital mediums, all sorts. So, form is really not a restriction, and it won't be the traditional performing arts festival of a collection of shows and a book. That is something I can tell you with certainty.

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GIDEON: "Who's on the panel for this first round selection process?" Are we allowed to--

HANNAH: Yeah!

GIDEON: I'm just turning to our producers here. Yes, we are, great! I'm gonna write them down as we say it, just to make sure that we haven't missed anyone out.

HANNAH: Yeah. One of them is Jeff Khan from Performance Space in Sydney. Another one is Genevieve Lacey, who's a musician, artist and curator for Melbourne.

GIDEON: Amrita Hepi who is a choreographer and performance-maker, who was living in Sydney, now living in Melbourne.

HANNAH: Kimberley Moulton who is a visual arts curator, and producer as well, and she's also on a number of art museum boards.

GIDEON: Daniel Browning who is a writer and journalist in culture, indigenous culture. He runs the show *Away!* on Radio National, amongst many other things.

HANNAH: In the international team, there's Michael Morris from Artangel in the UK, which is quite unusual commissioning and producing group that work with a lot of major institutions and festivals, including Manchester International Festival, Tate Modern, and National Theatre.

GIDEON: Stefan Schmidtke, he's the Director of Theater der Welt in Düsseldorf next year. They've both been working with us throughout the year, or since we've come on.

HANNAH: And Rachel Chanoff who's from The Office in New York. Who is also strongly involved in producing and commissioning new work and is a highly connected individual. And Woody McDonald as well, who is our music curator for the festival. And Bron Belcher from Next Wave festival as well. Senior producer there. So, it's a pretty broad team. And us, oh yeah! Thank you, producers.

GIDEON: Yes, we're also there. Well, are we there in the first round?

HANNAH: Only in lurking in the background.

GIDEON: Yeah, skulking, but not in an official capacity.

HANNAH: The next question we've got is, **"what percentage of the program will be commissioned work?"**

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It's really hard to say without seeing the projects. But given the scale of the commissioning fund of \$2 million, I would say it would make up a good third at least of the program, of new Australian work.

GIDEON: And I would guess there are a couple of other large commissions that sit outside of this that would make up probably another third. Overall, the RISING '21 will be a mostly commissioned festival in regard to the programming budget.

HANNAH: It's pretty exciting.

"Any tips for application content in regard to whether it should be focused on concept and selling an idea or story, or rather, would you like to know our idea of the what, how, and other logistics?"

We really wanna hear about the essence of the idea and how you see that, I guess, in the world. So that just sounds really vague, but we're not really interested in, you know, the freight and the venue and the technical side of it.

GIDEON: We will be, but--

HANNAH: We will be, but not right now. But we are interested in the audience experience, how you might see it sitting in a city, how you imagine people might encounter it, and how it connects to the public, I guess. It helps us understand where it might sit in a festival program. So, the concept and story and the idea are really the key thing. But also, it is very helpful for us to understand, how you imagine people encountering that work.

GIDEON: That's absolutely right. And I think in a way, what we do is, we're kind of really the representative of the public, an informed representative of the public. So, we are looking at things from that experiential point of view. So, the more you can kind of give us that sense, the easier it is for us to engage.

HANNAH: I'll give you this one.

GIDEON: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought it was the same question. **"Are you looking for work that fits to a curatorial vision, or will you develop the festival's vision from the work that you commission?"**

HANNAH: The second part.

GIDEON: Yeah, so we've pretty much laid out a pretty straightforward criteria, even though it's contradictory. And so, we are looking for work that sit within that criteria, but they can absolutely within that criteria, it's loose enough to have a vision. And we are, yeah, we would like to think that we are certainly being responsive to people's ideas, rather than driving those ideas.

HANNAH: We really would like the inaugural RISING to be reflective of the artists that live and work here, and so we're hoping to see from this commission ideas that really help us and help guide us in how to build the festival. And particularly in this moment, obviously we're living in a world of very rapid change. So even more so, we're less fixed to, you know, very set, it has to be themed or anything like that.

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GIDEON: So, we're getting a sense that we're really coming to the end of, and I think we've really looked at a lot of people's queries and I hope this has become useful for people who wish to apply. We really do encourage you to apply.

And we would like to finish with some final tips that have been presented to us, and we would like to present it to you. We may have covered them but in case we haven't, (TIP #1) be mindful of whether your idea and the way your idea is presented, takes into consideration the criteria we've outlined in the A Call to Artists.

HANNAH: Which is all on the website. There's quite detailed information there. And also, the FAQ is really worth reading. The other one I'd say—

Sound cuts out at 54:28. Begins again at 55:46.

GIDEON: Great.

HANNAH: Are we, is everyone? Trying to get a read here. Where are we?

CREW MEMBER: Can you do the tips again? Can you do the tips again?

HANNAH: Oh sure.

CREW MEMBER: There was no sound. Oh.

CREW MEMBER: Been cut.

GIDEON: Oh, okay.

HANNAH: Oh, okay.

CREW MEMBER: Interrupted.

GIDEON: Okay, so just tell me where I've--

HANNAH: Tip one.

GIDEON: Okay, Tip one. I know this. Yeah, be mindful of whether your idea and the way your idea is presented takes into consideration the criteria we have outlined in A Call to Artists.

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HANNAH: The other one is to be really specific about what part of RISING. So, getting back to considering that festival context when you're articulating your idea, that, yes, we wanna hear about the core concept but also not in total isolation of the festival. So that would be really useful, just in terms of helping us decipher how it could work.

GIDEON: And you don't have to get hung up about COVID-19 or iso narratives. But if that is an important part of your proposal, that's fine, but that's not what this A Call to Artists is necessarily focusing on.

HANNAH: Yep and I'd say the final tip is to really have a look at those FAQs on the website. There's lots and lots of information and direction there. And there's also, as you might have already seen, there's the askus@rising.melbourne, if you've got any other questions that aren't covered in there.

And I'd just would finish by saying we really encourage applications from First Peoples artists. As we've covered before, the first week of RISING in 2021 falls on National Reconciliation Week, which is gonna be a key focus of the program. And just generally, beyond next year, we really would encourage First Peoples artists to apply. And anything else?

GIDEON: Yes, we also encourage culturally and linguistically diverse artists, and artists who are deaf or have disability, to apply. If you have difficulties submitting online, please contact us via askus@rising.melbourne, or on 03-9622-4242. Those details are on our website and will also be added to this post. Best to contact us earlier rather than next Monday at 11 o'clock, 'cos that doesn't leave you much time.

HANNAH: Yeah!

GIDEON: And we can talk through some of the tips, and we'll begin answering questions to make sure you comment below or text us on 0427-041-896. Is that true?

HANNAH: Yeah.

GIDEON: Wow. You may not wanna do that. You may not get an answer.

HANNAH: So just in case you haven't clocked it, the submissions are due Monday 8th of June at midday (12PM AEST).

So, I think we'll leave it there. But I just wanna say we're very excited about this and can't wait to look through all of the submissions. And yeah, very grateful for your contribution and taking the time to be a part of this, and to listen to this Q&A.

GIDEON: Thank you.

HANNAH: Thank you so much.

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GIDEON: See ya!

Livestream ends.