



Q&A with David Byrne about the open call for the Associate Playwright post

Hello, my name is David Byrne. I'm Artistic Director here at the Royal Court.

We just announced my first set of Associates and rather than appointing Associate Directors, I've chosen to appoint Associate Playwrights.

As a playwright myself and you can tell on the playwright because I hate being filmed and being on camera and feeling very awkward at the moment. I wanted to fill this building with fellow writers. The Royal Court has always been the writers theatre and it felt like it was time to put writers firmly in the driving seat alongside the writers that I have appointed and brought in. I wanted to find one more person to come and join us to leave a seat free at the table for a different perspective, someone maybe outside of our networks, someone who is going to surprise us with something new and that person is going to help us form and shape how we support writers over the next few years.

So what does the role of an Associate Playwright involve?

So, traditionally, here at the Royal Court, the associates have been directors, and those directors direct a certain number of shows a year, as well as supporting writers and artists working throughout the building.

Naturally, the associate playwrights aren't going to be writing all the plays here at the Royal Court, our main focus is going to be initially working out what the new shape of artist support is going to look like here in the building.

So, fundamentally, how are we going to support writers to make their best work? What structures are we going to put in place to make sure that we're getting the most exciting plays out of the most exciting writers?

And how can we make sure that we're working properly across the country?

To make sure that we're reaching every area that we possibly can and receiving plays from people from as many backgrounds as want to be writing plays and want to be having them staged here at the Royal Court. We're going to be working out what the shape of that is.

We've not had a team of associate playwrights before, so I think a part of it is going to be working out how we best work together and I suppose trying to figure out what the best way of getting the sort of most verdant possibilities out of that incredible group is going to be. So for the first year, I think we're really going to be sort of testing and trying different ways of working to see how we both work well as a group together, as a sort of

collective, but also what, individually, we can work on project wise, in order to really advance the cause of being a writer's theatre.

What kind of playwright are you looking for?

What's incredible about the history and the legacy here at the Royal Court is we have such a vast vista of work that we presented here over the years, formally, in terms of content, in terms of the styles of those work. So I think all of that is going to be part of the programming and the mix here at the royal court going forward. So, actually, we're really open to playwrights working in any form and in any style. And that could be people working in verbatim work, that could be people who are playwrighting in community settings, that could be people who are focusing on the well-made play. It could be people working in all sorts of alternative drama surges in all sorts of different forms. Basically, if you're writing for live performance, we are really keen to hear from

So in terms of qualifications, do I need a degree to apply?

Absolutely not. There is no formal qualifications barrier on this role whatsoever.

When applying for the associate playwright role, do you need to be able to commit to the same day a week throughout the year?

We've opened the Associate Playwright role to find someone who's going to bring us a different experience and a different set of perspectives on supporting writers. I think that's probably going to come from somebody who has a professional track record themselves in terms of a playwright and as a working artist. And therefore, we're trying to keep the role as flexible as possible, because we know working artists will be needing to go in and out of rehearsals. They'll be working on different projects, likely in different mediums. So therefore we're trying to keep everything as flexible as possible so the successful applicant to the role won't have any fixed working hours. We can be flexible around whatever schedule they're working with, and we can work together to make sure that it suits the needs of their careers and their wider commitments.

Is the opportunity open to playwrights outside of the UK?

Absolutely. We're really keen to hear from playwrights anywhere who think they might be able to fulfil the role and bring a different perspective here. Naturally, you need to be legally able / have the right to work in the UK because it's a paid position here at the Royal Court, but we're open to people who are based outside of London and outside of the UK. There's a likelihood that we might need to do some in person work, but for the right candidate, we can negotiate and work out what that is to make sure that it suits your location and your personal circumstances.

Do you need to be any particular age to apply?

Absolutely not. The opportunity is open to artists of any age, as long as you are of legal working age and able to work in the UK. We're really keen to hear from you. And the associates that I brought together in that collection already are already of sort of various ages, so we're looking for someone of any age who might want to take up the opportunity.

How often will opportunities like this one come up at the Royal Court?

So I've just started in my role here as Artistic Director, and I'm hoping this is only the first of many opportunities that we're going to be opening up to the wider playwriting community of how you can come and be a part in shaping our vision and shaping how we work and support with writers. What I'm hoping is that this open call is the first in a line of ways that we become, I suppose, more open to the sort of wider community of writers. Working with Open Hire has been really amazing on this opportunity to be able to really amplify and sort of spread that message out, making, I suppose, the process of getting these roles that sometimes feel like they happen a bit behind closed doors, more transparent and more open. So I'd say definitely watch this space. There are going to be many more roles and far, far more opportunities and moments that you can connect and contact with us going forward.

When is the deadline and how do I apply?

If you are interested in this role, please review the job description and email a CV and Cover Letter (in Word doc or PDF) to recruitment@royalcourttheatre.com by no later than 10am on 23rd May 2024. Please address how you meet the criteria set out above within your application.