

## First Nations Artist Residency Program

*Melbourne International Jazz Festival and the Australian Art Orchestra respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our festival and activities take place, the People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, as well as to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the wider Melbourne community and beyond. We are honoured to contribute to the over 60,000 years of music making and culture that has taken place on this land.*

### **Program Overview**

The First Nations Artist Residency Program is an artistic and professional development initiative presented in partnership between the Melbourne International Jazz Festival (MIJF) and the Australian Art Orchestra (AAO). The program supports the career development of a First Nations musician with a practice in jazz, improvisation, singer-songwriter music, hip-hop, soul, or contemporary art music and its composition.

The successful candidate will receive:

- A \$5,000 commission fee to develop a new work, with mentoring from MIJF and AAO.
- A performance outcome at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival 2025, including a separate performance fee.
- Up to \$5,000 for professional and artistic development opportunities, as negotiated with the AAO.
- The option to participate in the AAO's *Creative Music Intensive*, a 10-day annual residency held at Seacroft Estate along Great Ocean Road (VIC), including transport and accommodation.
- Producing support from MIJF staff to develop and present the work.
- Consultation session(s) with the AAO's First Nations Artistic Advisory Circle (Kutcha Edwards, Brenda Gifford and David Arden).
- Ticketing package for MIJF 2024/5 and artistic/industry networking opportunities.

### **About Melbourne International Jazz Festival**

Now in its 27th year, the Melbourne International Jazz Festival is Australia's leading platform for the promotion of jazz and improvised music. Over ten days in October, the Festival's annual program features over 130 performances and events showcasing 550 international and local artists and attracting over 60,000 attendees. Alongside a bold artistic program of commissioned works, world premieres, and cross-cultural collaborations, the Festival delivers a year-round sector development program aimed at fostering the next generation of Australian talent. The First Nations Artist Residency Program sits within the organisation's broader Artist Development Program, which seeks to promote diversity and inclusion in jazz and improvised music.

### **About The Australian Art Orchestra**

Australia's premiere creative music ensemble, the [AAO](#) was founded in 1994 by Paul Grabowsky AO, and is now led by the artistically fearless [Aaron Choulai](#). The AAO is committed to excellence, innovation, and collaboration, and works at the vanguard forging a distinctly Australian approach to musical improvisation. Using improvisation as a tool to interconnect, AAO creates music that shapes culture, and reflects a diversity of practice and expressions of Australia in the "here and now" that push us forward into new creative territory. The First Nations Artist Residency Program sits within the organisation's broader [Pathways](#) initiative and builds on more than 17 years of close collaboration with First Nations artists, including the Wilfred family from Ngukurr (NT), Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter.

## **Program Details**

### ***Part One: Commission and Performance at Melbourne International Jazz Festival***

The program leader will receive a \$5,000 commissioning fee to develop a new work for presentation at the 2025 Melbourne International Jazz Festival. Over the course of 14 months (August 2024 – October 2025), the AAO will advise and assist with professional development towards the delivery of the project. The date, time and venue of the premiere performance will be mutually agreed upon between the recipient and MIJF.

### ***Part Two: \$5,000 towards professional and artistic development***

The program leader will receive up to \$5,000 toward professional and artistic development opportunities, based on the experience, needs and aspirations of the successful candidate. Examples of how this money could be used include but are not limited to:

- Mentoring sessions or lessons with artists/creative professionals of your choosing
- Participation at an industry-networking event such as APAM or Big Sound
- Attendance at festivals, performances, or events, for the purpose of creative research and/or networking
- Short courses or workshops aimed at upskilling in areas such as new approaches to composition, marketing, social media, self-management, or music administration
- Travel costs associated with professional development activities

This component of the residency program will be driven by the successful recipient, supported through the shared networks and industry connections of MIJF and AAO.

The program leader will also have the option to participate in the AAO's *Creative Music Intensive*, a 10-day annual residency held at Seacroft Estate along Great Ocean Road (VIC) from September 9-19, 2024.

## **Eligibility Criteria – who can apply?**

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander musicians currently residing in Australia are eligible to apply. The program is open to a broad range of musical genres with the aim to support experimentation and improvisation within and across genres.

## **Artist Requirements**

The successful applicant must:

- Commit to the development of a new work for performance as part of the 2025 MIJF program.
- Be available to perform at MIJF between 17-26 October 2025, for which you will be paid a separate performance fee.
- Regularly communicate with the AAO and MIJF staff on the progress of their professional development program and commission.
- Commit to being available for media/promotional opportunities as reasonably requested from time-to-time by MIJF and/or AAO.

## **Timeline**

- 25 June 2024 – Applications open
- 5 August 2024, 5pm – Applications close
- August 2024 – October 2025 – Project development: new work and professional development
- September 9-19, 2024 – AAO *Creative Music Intensive* at Seacroft Estate along Great Ocean Road (VIC)  
\*optional
- 17-26 October 2025 – Performance as part of Melbourne International Jazz Festival (exact date/time TBC)

### **Application Process**

Please submit the following application materials [via our online form](#) by 5.00pm AEST on Monday 5 August 2024.

- Short answers to the following questions:
  1. Provide a brief summary of your experience as a musician and/or composer.
  2. What is your proposal/concept for the new work for your MIJF performance?
  3. What is your proposal for investing up to \$5,000 toward your professional and/or artistic development in 2024/5? (see pg. 2 for examples)
  
- Up to 3 representative audio/video samples of your performance work (online links preferred – i.e. Bandcamp, Soundcloud, Dropbox, YouTube, Vimeo, please provide passwords where necessary)

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted by MIJF to arrange a short interview, either in-person or online. Our panel team comprises MIJF, AAO and First Nations representatives.

If you require any help completing this application form and would like to discuss alternative application methods, including video or phone applications, please get in touch with Merinda, Tom or Aaron on the details below.

For any questions or assistance with your application please don't hesitate to contact us on:

**Merinda Dias-Jayasinha**, MIJF Festival & Programs Coordinator on [merinda@melbournejazz.com](mailto:merinda@melbournejazz.com) or by calling (03) 9001 1388

**Tom Browne**, MIJF Senior Producer & Programmer on [tom@melbournejazz.com](mailto:tom@melbournejazz.com) or by calling (03) 9001 1388

**Aaron Choulai**, AAO Artistic Director on [aaron@aao.com.au](mailto:aaron@aao.com.au) or by calling 0498 692 264

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Do I need to be a jazz musician to apply?**

No! The program is open to a broad range of genres, including but not limited to jazz, soul, hip-hop, art music, and other forms of improvised music. If you're unsure, get in touch with us and we can chat about the kind of music you make.

### **Is the program open to artists at all stages of their career?**

It sure is – from emerging artists right through to seasoned pros, the First Nations Artist Residency is designed to be tailored to the individual needs and career aspirations of the recipient.

### **Do I need to be a composer?**

You do not need to identify as a composer. If you are a creator or producer of music, then we are keen to hear from you.

That said, you will need to feel confident communicating your musical ideas with other musicians so that you can present your commission at MIJF. You don't necessarily need to have training as a composer or use traditional methods of writing music.

### **I am based outside of Melbourne – can I apply?**

Yes! The First Nations Artist Residency Program has been adapted to allow for flexible schedules. However, optional attendance at the AAO's *Creative Music Intensive* (9-19 September 2024) takes place at Seacroft Estate along Great Ocean Road (VIC), and you will develop your commission for presentation at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival (17-26 October 2025, exact date/time of performance TBC).

Please note that your \$5,000 professional development fund can be used to cover travel to/from Melbourne throughout the year. However, flights and accommodation for the *Creative Music Intensive* and your performance at MIJF will be covered separately. Reach out if you want to discuss your individual requirements prior to applying.

### **What does the professional development process look like?**

We will have an initial meeting to discuss how you would like to use the funding to support your professional and creative development, which we will then help design to suit your needs. From there, you will have regular supervision meetings with a member of the AAO's artistic team to workshop the commission over the course of 14 months.

### **What has the First Nations Artist Residency been like in previous years?**

The inaugural program leader in 2021 was award-winning musician, dancer, director and proud Djab Wurrung/Gunditj Mara and Ngarrindjeri man, Amos Roach. With support from the AAO, Amos composed *Six Seasons*, a suite of music which he premiered at the Melbourne Recital Centre during MIJF 2021. The work featured Amos on yidaki, Maria Moles on drums, Adrian Sherriff on trombone/shakuhachi, and Stephen Magnusson on guitar, as well as the Murrundaya Yepengna dancers.

In 2022 the program leader was composer and Yuin woman, Brenda Gifford. Brenda presented her commission *Moriya* at the Melbourne Recital Centre, inspired by the migration of whales and their significance in stories of creation. The performance featured Brenda on saxophone, Reuben Lewis on trumpet and electronics, Aviva Endean on clarinets, Andrea Keller on piano, Helen Svoboda on bass, Joe Brown McLeod on didjeridoo/clapsticks, and Maria Moles on drums. You can read more about Brenda's performance [here](#).

The 2023/24 resident artist is award-winning Noongar woman and Naarm-based vocalist and artist, Bumpy. Bumpy says of her appointment as program leader: "I am so honoured to be a part of this program. Over the year ahead, I hope to dive further into my language journey. With the support from the AAO and MIJF I'm excited to travel and connect to Country, presenting a work that not only supports this journey and expands my musicality but reflects

the nuances found while learning language. I'm super excited to collaborate and have access to incredible artists and resources while developing the piece!" Bumpy has just completed a 3-week trip to Noongar Boodja to connect with Country and language as part of her commission's development, with the performance to premier at Arts Centre Melbourne as part of this year's MIJF.

**Where can I find more info about the Melbourne International Jazz Festival?**

Previous Melbourne International Jazz Festival programs can be found here:

<https://www.melbournejazz.com/about-us/festival-archive/>

If you would like to know more, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Merinda or Tom at MIJF.

**What sort of thing has the Australian Art Orchestra done before?**

Here are a few projects to give you a better idea of who the Australian Art Orchestra are and the wide range of work they've commissioned and performed. If you would like to know more, please call or email Aaron at AAO.

[Kutcha Edwards and the Australian Art Orchestra](#)

[Raw Denshi](#)

[SHUFFLE - PLAY](#)

[Meeting Points Series: im/modesty](#)

[Hand to Earth](#)

[Meeting Points Series: Djiribawal](#)

[Creative Music Intensive](#)

[Of Deities and Demons](#)

[Kura Tungar](#)