

Ngargee yinganjaku

First Nations Contemporary Jazz Commission



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[Ngargee yinganjaku pronunciation](#) (*Narg-ee yin-gan-jah-ku*)

Create a bold new work for Big Jazz Day Out, Melbourne International Jazz Festival and Wangaratta Jazz Festivals in 2027.

Monash University Performing Arts Centres (MPAC) invites First Nations artists to propose an ambitious new music project for premiere performance at Big Jazz Day Out in March 2027, as well as presentation opportunities to be negotiated with major jazz programs at Melbourne International Jazz Festival and Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues. This commission provides time, creative support and financial investment to develop an original work that explores improvisation, collaboration and contemporary First Nations creative practice. Whether your work draws on jazz, hip hop, experimental music, classical traditions, electronic production, spoken word or sits somewhere between genres, we're looking for projects that are artist-led, innovative and uniquely your own.

The phrase *ngargee yinganjaku* has been generously gifted by senior Boonwurrung Elder Professor N'arwee't Carolyn Briggs AM, as an invitation in Boonwurrung language to create, sing and perform with purpose.

About MPAC

Monash University Performing Arts Centres (MPAC) is a unique creative organisation where Monash University's research excellence meets the transformative power of artistic collaboration. A place for community, creativity and discovery, MPAC presents live music, theatre, dance, festivals and interdisciplinary performance across five venues.

Our venues are located on the unceded lands of the Boonwurrung Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge and celebrate the continuing traditions of storytelling, song, dance and music that have been practised on these lands for more than 60,000 years, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We commission and present new work by leading artists from Australia and around the world. As part of Monash University, we connect artists with researchers, academics and students to foster new ideas, creative partnerships and interdisciplinary outcomes. Monash University has a substantial and growing network of exceptional First Nations academics and artists and is committed to supporting original First Nations ideas and performance in a collaborative, artist-centred environment.

Why this Commission?

At MPAC, we believe that artists need more than a commission fee to create ambitious new work. They need time, space, trusted collaborators and the freedom to experiment.

This commission has been created to support a First Nations artist to develop an original jazz or art music work in a collaborative environment, with access to professional facilities and creative support. We recognise that new work often grows through conversation, exploration and creative risk-taking, and this opportunity has been designed to support that process.

Whether your project is deeply personal, community-led, experimental or genre-defying, we encourage proposals that reflect your artistic vision and creative practice.

The commissioned work will premiere at our popular annual festival known as [Big Jazz Day Out](#) in March 2027, placing your work alongside leading Australian musicians and introducing it to new audiences. Beyond the premiere, the commission aims to foster lasting creative relationships and contribute to the ongoing visibility and celebration of First Nations voices within Australia's contemporary music landscape. The successful recipient of the commission will meet with Directors from major jazz festivals such as Melbourne International Jazz Festival and Wangaratta Jazz and Blues Festival to discuss future performance opportunities for your work.

About the commission

We're seeking one First Nations artist/group or creative leader to develop a new 30–40 minute performance work to premiere at Big Jazz Day Out in March 2027.

The commissioned work may consist of:

- A suite of original compositions
- A collection of connected works
- An interdisciplinary performance
- An improvisation-led project
- Another format that best serves your artistic vision

We encourage proposals that embrace collaboration, experimentation and contemporary First Nations storytelling. We are looking for original ideas that have not been performed anywhere previously.

What you'll receive:

\$15,000 commission funding to support the development of your new work. These funds may be used toward:

- Composition
- Arranging
- Collaborator fees

- Rehearsal costs
- Artist fees
- Creative development
- Music preparation and transcription
- Other reasonable project costs
- Performance Fees

It is a strict condition of the commission that you will be available on **Saturday March 20th 2027** for the performance, and participate in reasonable media requests prior.

Creative development residency

Five fully supported development days at the Monash University Clayton Campus, including:

- Rehearsal space
- Professional backline
- Technical support
- Sound engineer
- Space for experimentation and creative development

Creative support and creative exchange

To the extent that you would like to, you will have access to work with leading Australian artists during your development phase, including:

- Tom Molyneux (Gunditjmara man; Performer, Playwright, and Head of First Nations Programming & Engagement at MPAC)
- Paul Grabowsky (ARIA Award-winning composer and pianist, and Executive Director at MPAC)
- Chelsea Wilson (Acclaimed vocalist, songwriter, broadcaster, and Senior Producer of Contemporary Music at MPAC)

The successful artist will also have opportunities to connect with Boonwurrung Traditional Custodians, Monash University researchers, academics and student musicians where appropriate, creating space for creative exchange, new ideas and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Please note in your application if there are specific individuals or Monash ensembles you would like to approach to support your idea.

Professional documentation

As part of the commission, you will receive professional photography and video documentation, including promotional images and behind-the-scenes content from your creative development and performance to support future presentation and promotion of the work.

Your application

Who can apply?

Applicants must:

- Be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent, and be accepted as such by their community.
- Be based in Australia.
- Demonstrate an established or emerging artistic practice.
- Be available to participate in the development period and performance dates.

Applications from artists working across music and interdisciplinary practice are encouraged.

What kind of work are we looking for?

We welcome projects that:

- Celebrate creativity and improvisation.
- Push artistic boundaries.
- Explore collaboration.
- Bring together different musical traditions or artforms.
- Centre First Nations voices and perspectives.
- Incorporate jazz, art music and improvisation. Can include elements of R'n'B, soul and blues.

Above all, we're looking for an original artistic vision that reflects your creative practice.

You may choose to:

- Work independently.
- Collaborate with other musicians or artists.
- Invite guest performers.
- Work with producers.
- Develop new creative partnerships.

Artists are also encouraged to think ambitiously about collaboration. Depending on your project, there may be opportunities to work with existing Monash ensembles, including Monash Sinfonia, [Monash Art Ensemble](#), or involve Monash students in the creative process where appropriate.

Application requirements

Please submit:

- Artist biography.
- A 300–500 word proposal describing your artistic concept.

- Up to 300 words describing how the work will be presented live at Big Jazz Day Out (for example, what type of venue will best suit your idea? Does it have specific technical needs? Any other important considerations to make it a success?)
- A short description of how you intend to use the five-day creative development residency in one of the MPAC venue spaces.
- Examples of previous work (audio, video, images or links).
- A simple project budget.
- A short response to the question:
 - Why do you want to undertake this commission, and what would this opportunity mean for your creative practice?

Next steps

Assessment Panel:

The assessment panel will read all applications and get back to all applicants. The assessment panel will be made up of Tom Molyneux (Head of First Nations Programming & Engagement, MPAC), Paul Grabowsky AO (Executive Director MPAC), Chelsea Wilson (Senior Producer of Contemporary Music at MPAC), Ruth Oakley (Head of Programming, MPAC), and representatives from our jazz alliance partners at Melbourne International Jazz Festival and Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues.

Timeline

Date	Activity
2 September 2026	Applications open
30 September 2026	Applications close
21 October 2026	Successful applicant announced
Late 2026	Creative development period, including promotional photography & video. Dates by negotiation
20 March 2027	Premiere at Big Jazz Day Out

Deliverables

The successful artist will deliver:

- A completed original work (minimum 30–40 minutes in duration).
- Demo recordings, score or performance materials as proof of concept/completion of development.
- Participation in the creative development residency.
- Participation in promotional photography and video.

- Premiere performance at Big Jazz Day Out 2027 (a separate performance fee will be paid in addition to the commissioning fee).

Questions

If you have any questions about the commission or would like to discuss your application, we'd love to hear from you.

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