

Popcorn Writing Award 2023 – winner will be announced this week

The winner of an award made by Popcorn Group will be announced on Thursday in a ceremony at Gilded Balloon.

This award is made to the best of new writing at the Fringe – championing “fearless new writing” and “distinctive unique voices” and awards a prize of £6,000 offering access to the BBC commissioners. BBC Writersroom headed by Jessica Loveland nurtures talent into the screen industry.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is a vital springboard for the careers of up-and-coming talent in the arts having in the past launched the careers of creatives such as Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman and Rachel Weisz. The Popcorn Writing Award plays a huge part in highlighting new voices from all over the world, and the Fringe is its perfect partner in discovering and uplifting some incredible stories.

Jess Loveland, Head of New Writing said: “BBC Writersroom is delighted to partner with the Popcorn Group for a second year. This year’s longlist is incredible, and we can’t wait to get up to Edinburgh to immerse ourselves in the fantastic new writing there. We very much enjoyed meeting last year’s longlisted writers and look forward to developing connections with this talented collection of writers.”

Charlotte Colbert and Natalie Denton from Popcorn Group said: “The Fringe is one of the best events of the year. It is so

wonderful to connect with the incredible talent who showcase their bold and fearless work there each year. The festival is a pure celebration of creativity and such a wonderful platform for new voices as well as audiences who always leave energised and inspired."

The Popcorn Award 2023 longlisted plays are:

24, 23, 22 by Doug Deans, Underbelly

It's just an ordinary day. At the beginning of the day, Fran is late for work. At the end of the day, Brendan is bleeding out in the street. Time flows forwards and spirals backwards. Fran progresses through the worst day of her life. Brendan rewinds through his last day alive. Soon they'll meet in the middle, and we'll find out what has happened to him, and what will happen to her.

Asexuality! The Musical by Rebecca McGlynn, Gilded Balloon

Asexuality! is an autobiographical musical comedy about transgender playwright Rebecca McGlynn's pre-transition life. The story follows Robert, an asexual man navigating a hypersexual world. Through music and comedy, he explores sex, romance, love and loss... and, eventually, HER true gender identity.

Before The Drugs Kick In by Mike Lemme, TheSpaceUK

A 62-year-old in an insane asylum closes her eyes and becomes a 28-year-old stand-up comedian. But not just any comedian, a comedian who had the potential to become the greatest of all time. A tribute to the mothers society wrote off as crazy, instead of giving them an opportunity to live.

Bitter Lemons by Lucy Hayes, Pleasance

Bitter Lemons takes the form of two intersecting monologues following the lives of two women: a grieving goalkeeper and an ambitious investment banker, as they both face the biggest

professional pitch of their lives. When they both fall unexpectedly pregnant, their lives shift in parallel and collide in unexpected ways.

Dugsi Dayz by Sabrina Ali, Underbelly

Four students, Salma, Yasmin, Munira, and Hani are in detention on a Saturday afternoon, but the reason remains a secret. During a power outage, they share folktales to break the ice. As they bond, they discover surprising similarities.

Green Fingers by Adam Sowter, Flo Poskitt and Ben Tansey, Pleasance

A deliciously Dahl-esque treat, about a boy born with gunky green hands. But is there more to these fingers than mayhem and mess? Maybe the answers lie within the mysterious school garden... *Green Fingers* is a magical, musical story exploring ideas of accepting yourself, and engaging with the natural world.

GUSH by Abby Vicky-Russell, Assembly

GUSH by Abby Vicky-Russell is a one woman show about the dynamics of a father and daughter relationship, and how they change in the aftermath of a rape. Abby Vicky-Russell plays a fictionalised version of her own father – a plumber who has come to the theatre to fix a leak so a dance troupe can perform their piece. The show then devolves into a piece of character comedy in which the plumber breaks out of his previously closed off demeanour and explores the most difficult situation he's ever faced. *GUSH* is a feminist comedy that prioritizes accessibility, hilarity and truth without villainising anyone.

Her Green Hell by Emma Howlett, Summerhall

A one-woman-monologue inspired by the true story of Juliane Koepcke, the teenager who survived a plane crash and a fall of 10,000ft in Peruvian Amazon in 1971. It explores our fraught power struggle with nature, and is as much about the rainforest's fight to survive as it is Juliane's.

Hive by Ariella Como Stoian, Assembly

The demolition site of a 70s housing estate, reluctant Megacorp conservationist and single mum Ria has been called in to sort a hive. It's halting redevelopment, messing up the bottom line. But Ria's teenage kid Salve was just suspended. And the site manager hints at something more... unusual. More sinister.

In Everglade Studio by Nathaniel Brimmer-Beller, Assembly

In 1974 London, three musicians and their manager seal themselves inside an underground recording studio to complete an original Americana album overnight. As artistic, social, and racial tensions flare, the atmosphere grows thornier, the music grows stranger, and Everglade Studio's mixture of creativity and claustrophobia demands its pound of flesh.

Involuntary Momslaughter by Abigail Paul, Greenside

The unique perspective of surviving narcissistic abuse through humour and wisdom can be a compelling and potentially therapeutic experience for many.

Kill The Cop Inside Your Head by Subira Joy, Summerhall

Spoken word and performance artist Subira Joy explores their experiences being targeted by the police as a Black, queer and trans person in the UK. Combining striking visual imagery with powerful language, this new work examines the impact of the police in our communities and how we internalise their role to repress and suppress ourselves into submission. Tracing narratives of police encounters while centring themes of violence, gaslighting and abuse of power, this work exposes how we impede our liberation when confronted by our inner cop.

Lady Dealer by Martha Watson Allpress, Summerhall

For Charly, every day is the same. They used to be different, when there was Clo, but there isn't Clo anymore and she doesn't want to dwell on that. She just wants to chug coffee, blast Beastie Boys and deal drugs. Simple. But when Charly

suffers a power cut, she's forced back into the real world; a world of knockoff Morrisseys, disapproving mothers and, ultimately, a world she has to navigate alone.

Lie Low by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth, Traverse

Lie Low is a dark comedy about a woman, Faye, who's having trouble sleeping following a break-in at her home. Desperate to shake her insomnia, she enlists the help of her brother, Naoise, to try a form of exposure therapy. But Naoise has a devastating secret that's about to explode.

Nan, Me & Barbara Pravi by Hannah Maxwell, Summerhall

An epic tale of love, loss and explaining how to use the microwave. In 2021, Hannah Maxwell moved back to the home counties to care for her recently bereaved grandmother. But this show isn't about that. It's about France's Eurovision star Barbara Pravi, who's just lovely. In between cooking, cleaning and Countdown, Maxwell escapes into an intensifying fantasy of ballroom dances, heartfelt ballads, fluent French and definitely-not-creepy plots to engineer a meet-cute with a random foreign celebrity.

Public – The Musical by Stroud & Notes, Pleasance

Public – The Musical is a pop/rock show where strangers Laura, Andrew, Zo, and Finley, find themselves stuck for an hour in a gender-neutral public toilet. Through head-bopping songs and honest, comedic dialogue, they tackle sticky conversations, and confront their biases, exploring the power of human connection in a changing world.

Strategic Love Play by Miriam Battye, Summerhall

So they've both swiped right. Now they're meeting for the first time. Facing each other. As if that's a normal thing to do. Welcome to your hot date. With acid wit, Miriam Battye takes a scalpel to modern romance, interrogating what we really talk about when we talk about love.

Super by Matthew Radway, Pleasance

On Hollywood Boulevard, a group of actors are posing as famous characters for photos with tourists. Right now it's 100°, Batman has just punched Robin in the face and the whole thing is about to be on TMZ. Captain Jack has fainted and Catwoman is screaming. It's all gone wrong.



Matthew Radway writer of *Super* nominated for a BBC Writers Room Popcorn Award PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

The Brief Life & Mysterious Death Of Boris III, King of Bulgaria by Sasha Wilson & Joseph Cullen, Pleasance

This play is about the heroic rescue of the Jewish Bulgarians during WWII by their king, country and the tenacity of Bulgaria. *The Brief Life & Mysterious Death of Boris III, King of Bulgaria* follows the king through the political maze and to a critical moment of choice, where he stands up for what is right.

waiting for a train at a bus stop by Mwansa Phiri, Summerhall
Chilufya's name – meaning 'the lost one' – makes perfect sense as lost is how she has felt most of her life. Struggling with low self-esteem and a waning sense of self she finds herself

being drawn into a controlling relationship. A gripping story about cultural identity, mental health and coercive control.



Member of the cast of Public performing at Pleasance launch 5
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