

# talent camp

2019

NSW &  
ACT

AFTRS

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## What is Talent Camp?

Talent Camp is a skills development program spanning two years. We begin with a week-long intensive workshop in each state, followed by a national camp for select state participants. We end with opportunities for internships, placements and production for participants, where possible.

The state camps involve the selection of up to 15 participants from each state and territory, through an open application process. To find the best emerging talent we liaise with the highly networked community arts sector across the country to get the word out, and to support potential applicants.

We want to find the best candidates, but we know that they haven't all had the best opportunities, so we look for a mix of talent, experience and motivation.

# Tomorrow's Storytellers

## Workshop Facilitators

### Stephen Davis



Stephen is an AFI nominated and multi-award-winning writer with five features credits (*City Loop*, *Blurred*, *Monkey Puzzle*, *The Reef* and *Drown* – which he also produced) to his name. His work has played at the Toronto, Tokyo, Sydney and Cannes Film Festivals and resulted in multi-millions at the box office. He is also a bestselling playwright with six published works for Playlab Press (*A Very Black Comedy Indeed*, *Juice*, *Blurred*, *Tranzitions*, *Rites of Passage Trilogy* and *Wet Dogs*) and one with Hawker Brownlow (*Burnt*). Four of the above works are curriculum staples in high schools across Australia.

### Eliza Reilly



Eliza Reilly is a producer, writer, director and actor for film, television and theatre. She grew up on a cattle farm in rural Australia, isolated and without television reception. Subsequently, she was forced to entertain herself by putting on hour-long improvised plays with her sister. Since then, she has gone on to become a maker of bold comedic work across multiple mediums, presented with a “fresh, female first approach” (ELLE Magazine). She has recently been named in TV Week Magazine’s “Next Gen of Women in TV”. In 2017, she co-created, wrote and starred in ABC1’s *‘Growing Up Gracefully’*. It was released to critical acclaim and enormous online engagement – sketches from the series have been viewed nearly 17-million times on Facebook.

In 2018, Eliza produced, co-wrote, directed and co-starred in a multi-platform comedy series, *‘Sheilas’*. That same year, she also co-wrote, directed and performed in her first original comedy musical, *‘Yarramadoon: The Musical’* – it premiered at Sydney’s Belvoir St Theatre to a sold-out and extended season.

### Liz Kearney



Liz Kearney is an Australian producer. Alongside Robert Connolly and Maggie Miles, Liz produced the Australian film *Paper Planes*, which grossed almost \$10 million at the Australian box office. In 2015, Liz was an executive producer on Stephen Page’s directorial debut, *Spear*. In 2017, alongside producers Robert Connolly and John Harvey, Liz produced the 8 x half hour comedy drama series *The Warriors* for the ABC. She also produced the 9-minute stop motion animated film *Lost Property Office* with cardboard sculptor Daniel Agdag. The short won Best Short Animation and Best Director at the 2017 Sydney Film Festival and Best Short Animation at the 2018 AACTAs and was shortlisted for an Academy Award in 2018.

Most recently, Liz produced David Wenham’s feature film debut *Ellipsis* and Thomas M Wright’s debut feature *Acute Misfortune*, which premiered at MIFF in 2018, won The Age Critics Prize and was released nationally in May 2019.

### Gary Paramanathan



Gary Paramanathan works at the intersection of arts, culture and community. Gary is currently the Acting Manager, Outreach, at AFTRS, and has previously worked in Western Sydney on community arts and cultural development projects, including with ICE, Fairfield City Council, Penrith City Council, Parramasala and Diversity Arts Australia. He founded the short film festival Colourfest and the storytelling night Them Heavy People. Gary holds a Masters in International Communications.

Gary is passionate about migrant and diaspora storytelling and hopes to add to the rich tapestry of diverse Australian storytelling through his work.



# Cyrus Bezyan

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“Write a funny, interesting sentence or phrase that captures you.”

– HOW TO FILL OUT FORMS BY CYRUS BEZIAN

## Biography

A filmmaker, comedian and writer, Cyrus finished an accounting degree and pursued a film career by working in a video store, then completing a Master of Screen Arts in Screenwriting from AFTRS in 2013. Cyrus has worked as a writer/director across comedy, drama and animation. From 2015 to 2018, he was the editor for Comedy Central Australia, overseeing the commissioning of digital content. As a comedian, he’s performed at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Sydney Comedy Festival and Splendour in the Grass.

## Story

*Crowd Funded Man* is about a couple who crowdfund having a baby online. However, new laws state that the baby must pay its debt to those who contributed via time and assistance once it turns 25. The story begins 25 years later and, each episode, the now 25-year-old helps different people with various dilemmas.

## Where To Next

I want to find established producers and agents who can secure funding for a web series or pilot. I’m interested in writing and acting in this project, so finding a director is also important.



# Emily Dash

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Emily Dash is an emerging theatre and film practitioner with disability, whose work emphasises social justice and expands perceptions of disability.

## Biography

Emily’s film writing and performance credits include “*I Am Not A Work of Art*” (2016), “*The Cards I’m Dealt*” (2016) and Johanna Garvin’s “*The Milky Pop Kid*” (2017 – Highly Commended for Writing at Sydney Film Festival). She did a writing and research internship with Matchbox Pictures in 2017, from which she was credited as a consultant on ABC drama “*The Heights*”. She is also a scriptwriter and project manager for Maitree House.

## Story

Keeping their friend’s cafe alive, five diverse companions ride life’s roller coaster and heal old wounds. “*Pearly Gates*” is a darkly funny and poignant new Australian TV series about life, love, forgiveness, redemption and friendship with plenty of heart. It will examine topics like death and grief, sexuality and relationships.

## Where To Next

I want to develop my script and gain feedback from other writers. I also want to learn more about how my work fits into the industry, and how to make it appealing to producers so that it might have future opportunities.



# Genevieve Craig

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Dancehall Queen lights up the Chief storyteller soul to touch humans as an actor, writer, presenter and producer of screen media!

## Biography

Genevieve is a recovering-investment-banker-turned-style-queen-dancehall-er who lives to inspire people through hilarious stories that bust through stereotypes. Genevieve's credits range from films and documentaries to VR series, and include *Dream Channel*, *#Blessed* and ABC's *Happily Never After*. Genevieve is an energised entrepreneur with a Bachelor of Business with Distinction from UTS and an Advanced Diploma of Acting for Contemporary Screen Media from the ISA. A political journalist by night and founder by day of the concept: PLAY POWER PRESENCE.

## Story

*CHIKAS* follows the life of Jazz and Alex, two Aussie-Asian queer Sydneysiders who give the finger to the 9-to-5 world to seek creative freedom. They come out as 'dirty creatives', embodying their mothers' guilt and shame, and find themselves homeless, hospitalized and heartbroken. Do they find their purpose and live their dream?

## Where To Next

I would like to have a plot sheet for Season 2 and develop the 6 episodes by 10 minutes. I also need a seasoned comedic POC female writer with 8-10 years' experience in Australia, a producer to drive the project, development funding and a mentor.



# Jannali Jones

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Jannali Jones is a Gunai woman living in Sydney. She has a passion for writing and has over ten years' experience in the television industry.

## Biography

My family is Gunai from East Gippsland, Victoria. I was born in Adelaide and have lived in Sydney for the past twenty years. I developed an interest in writing from a young age and my work has been published both in Australia and overseas. Magabala Books recently published my young adult novel, *'My Father's Shadow'*, which was the winner of the Black&Write! Indigenous Writing Fellowship. I have worked for NITV, SBS and the ABC working with all genres in development and commissioning, and currently work in business affairs focusing on rights management.

## Story

Set on the 18th century frontiers of country New South Wales, two leaders – one of a new European town and the other of the local Aboriginal tribe – both face adversity when pit against drought, food shortages and unrest amongst their people.

## Where To Next

I'm hoping to contribute my skills as a writer and my industry knowledge to a range of film and television projects.



# Jessica Phoebe Hanna

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Jessica has a passion for telling true, thought-provoking and intersectional stories from the female gaze. She incorporates her background in psychology in her filmmaking and acting.

## Biography

Jessica Phoebe Hanna is an actress, director and writer, born in Sydney from Egyptian parents. Jessica's most notable films include the award-winning 'Regime', which explores the war in Syria through the eyes of a young Syrian woman. In addition, Jessica wrote and acted in the award-winning film 'My Name is Mohamad and Raghad and We Don't Exist Here Anymore', which explores the true story of a refugee family's plight in their new country. Both films display Jessica's ability to explore ideas and stories openly, honestly and candidly, while pushing audiences to think deeply about their subject matter.

## Story

*Female Engineered* is a comedy set in a Sydney-CBD elite Engineering firm. It follows the daily struggles of a young, ethnically diverse and female civil engineer who was brought on by the company to fulfil their gender equity criteria.

## Where To Next

Through Talent Camp, I am hoping to collaborate with other writers to develop the script, to find an experienced producer and to seek production and distribution funding.



# Jules Orcullo

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A deer in headlights, caught on a road between Zen and wanderlust – if the deer were Asian, had weird-shaped boobs, and spent all its money on UberEats.

## Biography

Jules Orcullo is a Filipinx-Australian playwright, dramaturg, director, performer, and producer with The Joy Offensive. In 2019, she made and developed work at Riverside Theatres, Kings Cross Theatre, Belvoir, Q Theatre and Bunker Theatre. Previously, she worked in the UK developing shows with marginalised artists, creating work about identity, decolonisation and psychosexual dysfunction. She is an alumna of writing programs at Playwriting Australia, ATYP, The Royal Court, Soho Theatre, Belgrade Theatre, and the Lyric Hammersmith. Jules now works in Administration for Contemporary Asian Australian Performance.

## Story

A scrappy, young Filipina-Chinese television producer must wrestle with her public integrity, secret ambitions and private desires when tasked to run Australia's newest, most controversial reality dating format: this white bloke wants a wife, and that wife is Asian.

## Where To Next

I would love to connect with diverse writers who are making waves in screen, as well as to connect with development mentors, script editors and producers of colour who are making binge-able comedy about sticky lived experiences.



# Marissa McDowell

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I am a passionate teller of indigenous and non-indigenous stories across multiple platforms through image, voice, song and dance.

## Biography

Marissa is a Wiradjuri woman and an independent producer of Black & White Films who has worked with Indigenous communities. She has had documentaries screened on NITV/SBS, is a published poet, exhibited photographer, has worked as a radio producer for 2XXFM, a ROPO and NOA for ABC News and in live production for GIO Canberra Stadium.

She has received her Master's in Business and Leadership at AFTRS and a Bachelor of Arts Honours at UC. She is currently learning her Wiradjuri language to produce educational resources and is a member of USMOB Writing.

## Story

Dave and Archie, a pair of irreverent Aboriginal Paramedics, drive a dilapidated Ford ambulance and are faced with patients who suffer from real life illnesses and self-inflicted injuries stranger than fiction. They appear to be inexperienced and politically incorrect with how they deal with their patients, which reflects on their personal lives.

## Where To Next

Through Talent Camp, I want to workshop my web series 'Ambos', develop it to be pitch ready and seek production funding.



# Michail Mathioudakis

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A huge gay nerd trying to make the world a queerer place.

## Biography

Michail is a writer, filmmaker and artist who applies a queer lens to his storytelling while drawing from his experiences as a person of Greek/Vietnamese heritage. He has recently graduated from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) with a Bachelor of Arts in Screen and a Graduate Certificate in Screenwriting. Throughout his time at AFTRS, Michail has worked with Queer Screen, Nickelodeon and Endemol Shine. He's also worked across a multitude of films, including directing his own experimental and documentary shorts, *Venus* (2015) and *Velvet* (2016).

Michail is currently employed at Discovery Networks ANZ and is writing his web-series, *Witch Hunties*, and Australian-Vietnamese horror feature, *Ma*.

## Story

*Witch Hunties*: Three broke drag queens use witchcraft to pursue a life of crime in a desperate attempt to make rent, but soon find out that all magic comes at a cost.

## Where To Next

My goals following Talent Camp are to secure production funding for *Witch Hunties* in order to shoot in early 2020, as well as to pursue work opportunities within development and writers' rooms to further foster my career as a screenwriter.



# Mohini Herse

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“She doesn’t even go here”

– MEAN GIRLS

## Biography

Mohini is a writer, director and designer best known for directing Australia’s first Instagram series “*The Out There*”. Her work has also screened at film festivals throughout Australia, with her most recent film “*WallSpace*” premiering at Flickerfest earlier this year.

With a background in prop making and production design, Mohini is drawn to bold visuals and genre storytelling. Mohini’s most recent project “*Hair*” is a surreal and satirical comedy inspired by her own tangled relationship with her body hair.

## Story

Geraldine has a secret. She is a hairy beast.

Sick of her daily routine of plucking, shaving and waxing her hair, Geraldine decides to opt for laser hair removal. However, after her first laser session, her shower drain becomes badly blocked. She then pulls out, to her surprise, an incredibly hirsute young woman.

## Where To Next

The biggest priority for “*Hair*” is its pathway to audiences. I am currently looking for an online distribution platform and to partner with a production company to develop “*Hair*” with the current creative team.



# Natasha Henry

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Natasha Henry is a storyteller with PNG heritage, who has a slate of her own television and film ideas she would like to develop.

## Biography

A Papua New Guinean/Australian with a passion for storytelling. My Metro Screen-funded short documentary *Aunty Betelnut* screened at Flickerfest, St Kilda, San Francisco and Raindance Festivals. I have a deep love of film and have spent over 20 years as an arts, marketing and communications specialist.

My PNG heritage provides me with a genuine understanding of straddling the complexities between two cultures. I want to create emotionally resonant projects and play an active role in ensuring a multicultural and inclusive screen sector with gender parity.

## Story

*The Museum* is a satirical comedy series which follows the working lives of a newly appointed museum leadership team, whose institution will be forced to close unless it finds visitors, funding and relevance in today’s world of social media and instant gratification.

## Where To Next

I am seeking mentorship from an established producer and a screenwriter to support the creation of *The Museum*. I would like to develop a pitch bible and apply for government development financing for this project.



# Neilesh Verma

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I don't believe in personal branding.

## Biography

Neilesh Verma is a Pakistani-Australian writer, director and former standup comedian. His award-winning short films and music videos have screened at both local and international film festivals and on television networks such as MTV (India), Triangle TV (New Zealand) and SBS (Australia). In the past, he has performed at both the Sydney Comedy Festival and the Sydney Fringe Festival and has recently finished writing his first feature film – a horror thriller entitled “*Koan*”.

## Story

Culturally conflicted Sri Lankan-Australian Rohan quits his high paying corporate job in order to pursue a more meaningful existence. Assisted by his eccentric friend Ganesh, Rohan escapes his comfort zone as he learns to navigate the sometimes-surreal terrain of being “other” in modern day Australia.

## Where To Next

We would like to have a strong idea of how to refine and develop our story into a concept and script that has an identifiable audience – and that will appeal to potential financiers, distributors and producers who are excited by our vision.

Additionally, I'd like to find a mentor who can help me navigate the initial steps needed to establish a career in the industry.



# Nina Oyama

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Nina Oyama is a writer/comedian who you might know from *Utopia* (a high-rating show) or *Tonightly with Tom Ballard* (a show that got cancelled).

## Biography

Nina Oyama scored her first television writing job at age 19, after a producer saw her performing standup comedy in a dingy room in Kings Cross. Since then, her work has been seen on *The Chaser's Election Desk*, *The Chinaboy Show*, *Tonightly with Tom Ballard*, *Mornings*, *The Project*, *The Slot Online* and *Squinters* Season 1 & 2. In 2017, *The Angus Project*, a web series Nina wrote and directed, was commissioned for a 30-minute pilot by ABC COMEDY's Fresh Blood Initiative. The pilot aired in late 2018 to critical acclaim and Nina scored an Australian Directors' Guild nomination. In 2019, Nina was handpicked by Screen Australia for their Talent LA delegation.

## Story

*DormTown*: A good natured and naive Resident Assistant must discipline a university dormitory that is out of her control.

## Where To Next

I would love for Talent Camp to help me finish writing all six scripts of *Dormtown* and eventually find funding to produce the full series, which I plan to submit to the festival circuit.



# Sabina Giado

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Muslim. Mom. Filmmaker.  
Hopeless romantic.

## Biography

Ethnically Sri Lankan but born and raised in Dubai, Sabina Giado is a comedy filmmaker whose passion is complex Muslim female protagonists. She was part of the first ever all-female comedy troupe in the Middle East, *The Funny Girls*, and the region's first improv troupe, *Improv Revolution*.

Her greatest accomplishments to date? Creating three short films in 1.5 years (wut wut); judging a feminist film festival called Fem.Cine.Anarchy; her tornado, sorry, toddler son; *The Funny Girls* being mentioned in a TED Talk; an off-the-cuff remark on #activistpickuonline ending up in a BuzzFeed article ("I'm underrepresented. In your pants."); and any number of failures that have made her who she is. She blogs at [www.sabinagiado.wordpress.com](http://www.sabinagiado.wordpress.com) and tweets at @SabinaGiado.

## Story

The only way her ALS-ridden mother will agree to stem cell therapy is if she gets married. So, this idealistic bad-ass comedian/investor is putting her suitors to the test – of improv comedy, that is.

## Where To Next

Next steps are to find a creative soulmate or producer (hopefully the same person), to seek development funding and to gather a group of lionhearted diverse female writers to explore the story world.

Image Courtesy of Blacktown Arts/Blacktown City Council, Photo by Joshua Morris.



# Sebastian Chan

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Those who can imagine anything, can  
create the impossible.

## Biography

Sebastian Chan is an award-winning filmmaker from ACT. Sebastian holds a Bachelor of Media Arts & Production from University of Canberra (2015) and an Advanced Diploma in Producing (Story, Audience, Finance) from AFTRS. His writing/production credits include *'I Am Steve'* (screening on SBS and Foxtel), *'Brothers In Alms'* and *'Bus Trip'*, which took out the 2018 'Best Australian Film' award at the Focus On Ability Festival. Sebastian is currently working on several projects to launch in 2020.

## Story

When a rookie sexual health blogger is blindsided by her boyfriend's request to be in an open relationship, she finds a way to sabotage his search for another partner so that she can prove to herself she can live by her own principles in both her public and personal life.

## Where To Next

I would like to meet as many working producers as possible, potentially finding a mentor. I would also like to secure distribution for my digital series *'Open Heart Therapy'*. If possible, it would also be great to work as an attachment on the next big production or as a note taker in a professional writers' room.



# Suren Jayemanne

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Industry darling adjacent.

## Biography

Sri Lankan-Australian Suren Jayemanne was touted to be one of Australia's best emerging comedians when selected for the prestigious 2014 Melbourne Comedy Festival 'Comedy Zone' showcase. He has since performed on TV (*Comedy Up Late*, *Tonightly*) as well as Triple J, ABC and BBC radio. Suren's debut TV special aired as part of the ABC's *Comedy Next Gen* series. Suren's comedy, which explores multiculturalism, race and class in contemporary Australia, has been praised as insightful, engaging and thought-provoking.

## Story

Culturally conflicted Sri Lankan-Australian Rohan quits his high paying corporate job in order to pursue a more meaningful existence. Assisted by his eccentric friend Ganesh, Rohan escapes his comfort zone as he learns to navigate the sometimes-surreal terrain of being "other" in modern day Australia.

## Where To Next

We would like to have a strong idea of how to refine and develop our story into a concept and script that has an identifiable audience – and that will appeal to potential financiers, distributors and producers who are excited by our vision.

I would also like to find a mentor with industry experience under whose guidance I can map out a career game plan.



# Tommy Misa

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Sometimes funny, Sometimes serious, always Tommy.

## Biography

Tommy is a Samoan-Australian artist based in Sydney. Raised in Samoa and Canberra with 5 brothers, his work often reflects his intersectionality and looks at Queerness in non-western context, as well as addiction, mental health and class. Tommy has worked as an actor on stage at Belvoir, Kings Cross Theatre and The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. He's worked on screen in the feature film *I Am Woman*, ABC's *Love Bites* and is regularly featured on BuzzFeed Australia with self-written comedic content. Tommy also performs in the queer and performance art scene, including for the Cuban Biennial, Club Kooky at the Oprah House and with Secret Garden Music Festival. Tommy is a current Artist in Residence with PACT.

## Story

Tommy has had enough with being a basic gay and his struggles with addiction. With the help of his Fa'afafine (Samoan non-binary identity) cousin Tilly, he is going to get sober and grow up – but not before learning a few lessons along the way.

## Where To Next

I would like to secure a producer and a core team that understands the content of this project. I'd also like to begin applying for funding in order to develop the pilot episode.



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