

**TheLab@UNSW:
Experimental Performance Hub & Chris Mumbulla First
Nations New Work
Sydney Fringe Festival 2026**



'Cosmic Vertigo', by Audley Anderson and Imbi - TheLab@UNSW 2025

What is TheLab@UNSW?

After a [hugely successful inaugural year](#) of TheLab@UNSW, UNSW's School of the Arts & Media is pleased to bring an expanded program back for 2026, in partnership with Sydney Fringe Festival.

TheLab@UNSW is an experimental performance hub housed in Studio One at the Esme Timbery Creative Practice Lab, showcasing interdisciplinary, experimental and innovative performance works by leading independent artists.

The 2026 season will feature two weeks of curated performances during Sydney Fringe, supported by structured development residencies and creative and production support through the Creative Practice Lab.

What's on Offer

A total of **4 new works** will be selected for TheLab@UNSW 2026 program. Also on offer is 1 honorarium for a First Nations New Solo Work, and 1 honorarium for UNSW SAM Alumni.

All 4 new works will receive the following:

- In Development
 - 2 x 1-week creative residencies at the Esme Timbery Creative Practice Lab to develop your project *in situ*
 - One residency in May 2026
 - One residency in August/September 2026
 - Access to the Creative Practice Lab props and costume stores, as well as other resources where available.
 - Creative and dramaturgical support through the Creative Practice Lab, including consultation with the Designer in Residence, Artistic Coordinator, and the Esme Timbery production team.
- In Presentation
 - Presentation in a curated 2-week season as part of TheLab@UNSW
 - In-kind venue hire of Studio One at the Esme Timbery Creative Practice Lab
 - Access to the standard Studio One tech set up, with basic lighting and AV.
 - A stage manager for your season
 - Front of house and bar staff for all performances
 - Waived Sydney Fringe registration fees
 - Artists will take 100% of the box office, minus internal standard Sydney Fringe ticketing fees.
 - Inclusion as a highlighted program within Sydney Fringe marketing

Chris Mumbulla First Nations New Work

In addition to the core TheLab@UNSW program, UNSW School of the Arts & Media is offering the Chris Mumbulla First Nations New Work Honorarium - a residency supporting the development of a new solo performance work by a First Nations artist, culminating in a premiere at TheLab@UNSW as part of the 2026 Sydney Fringe Festival.



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The selected artist will receive an honorarium of **\$6,000**, structured as follows:

- \$2,000 for Residency 1
- \$2,000 for Residency 2
- \$2,000 allocated toward the production budget of the work

As part of the residency, the artist is expected to deliver **one workshop for First Nations students** during the season of the new work. UNSW will organise for participating students to attend a performance.

The workshop is separate to the residency honorarium and this fee will be negotiated based on length, scale, and delivery requirements.

To be eligible for this, the applicant must be Australian First Nations.

If you would like to chat about this specific opportunity, please feel free to reach out to:

- Troy Reid, Production Assistant: UNSW Creative Practice Lab troy.reid@unsw.edu.au
- Erica Brennan, First Nations Coordinator, Sydney Fringe: erica@sydneyfringe.com, 0405096642
- Peta Joy Williams, First Nations Community Liaison, petajoy@sydneyfringe.com

UNSW School of the Arts and Media Alumni Honorarium Opportunity

UNSW SAM Alumni may apply for an honorarium of **up to \$5,000** to support development and production costs of new work.

To be eligible for this, the applicant must have an UNSW SAM Alumni in the core creative team.

Applicant Eligibility

All applicants must meet the following criteria before applying:

- The applicant must be an Australian resident
- The applicant must have a valid ABN
- The applicant must be over the age of 18

Project Criteria

The intention of TheLab@UNSW is to support and present exceptional experimental performance, with a focus on interdisciplinary artists and innovative performance practices. We want to work with artists who are taking on the responsibility to move their artform(s) forward.

We are seeking:

- **Exciting and authentic experimental performance** that demonstrates creative risk, curiosity and strong artistic intent
- Artists who are emerging, mid-career, or senior
- Works that demonstrate creative innovation and experimental approaches to making



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- Works that suit a festival model of presentation:
 - Shows must be under 60 minutes with no interval
 - The program will support 2 works per night in a shared billing with a 15-minute changeover between the shows
- Performances that are suited to the technical and spatial parameters of Studio One at the Esme Timbery Creative Practice Lab
 - Please see Studio One technical specifications here: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/ada/arts-media/resources/2019-10/venues-and-hire/2019-10-venues-and-hire-696726366-7.pdf>

Submissions will be assessed by a panel on artistic merit, innovation, and suitability for theLab@UNSW program. Shortlisted applicants will be interviewed before the final selection.

Key Dates:

Applications Close: 26th March 2026

Shortlisted Interviews: 1st – 3rd April 2026

Program Confirmed: 9th April 2026

May Residency Options (1 week):

- Option 1: Week commencing 4 May 2026
- Option 2: Week commencing 11 May 2026
- Option 3: Week commencing 18 May 2026
- Option 4: Week commencing 25 May 2026

August / September Residency Options (1 week):

- Option 1: Week commencing 24 August 2026
- Option 2: Week commencing 31 August 2026
- Option 3+4 : Week commencing 7 September 2026

Production and Presentation Weeks:

- Week 1: 14–20 September 2026
- Week 2: 21–27 September 2026
 - Bump In and Tech rehearsals running Monday + Tuesday
 - Performances running Wednesday to Saturday
 - Show 1 @ 6:30pm + Show 2 @ 8:00pm

Two shows will be programmed in Week 1 and two shows in Week 2, sharing the space. One work will require the ability to bump in quickly and have additional time to bump out. The other work will have additional time to bump in but must be able to bump out efficiently.

Apply Now:



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To apply, please register via Eventotron, the Sydney Fringe Festival management system. You will be prompted to create a profile before completing your application.

As an organisation, UNSW SAM actively promotes diversity, access and inclusion and strongly encourages applications from First Nations, CALD, d/Deaf and disabled, and LGBTQIA+ artists.

Contact:

If you would like to discuss your application, or have any access requirements, please contact Harriet Gillies, Artistic Coordinator of the School of the Arts & Media, at h.gillies@unsw.edu.au prior to submitting your application to discuss requirements.

For assistance with Eventotron, please contact artists@sydneyfringe.com. We look forward to welcoming applications to TheLab@UNSW 2026.

About Esme Timbery:

In 2019, the Creative Practice Lab was named in honour of Aunty Esme Timbery (1931–2023), her family, and the Bidjigal people, the traditional custodians of the land on which the building stands.

Aunty Esme was a celebrated Bidjigal artist and Elder from the La Perouse Aboriginal community, best known for her intricate shell work of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Her practice continues through her daughter Marilyn Russell and the La Perouse women, whose shellwork embodies deep cultural connection and resilience. Visitors can view works by Aunty Esme and Marilyn in the Creative Practice Lab foyer, a living reminder of the strength and continuity of Bidjigal creativity.

