E L T H A M P L A Y W R I G H T S

**A Play Writing Workshop at Eltham Little Theatre**

**Convened by Michael Olsen**

ELT are seeking expressions of interest in your participation in playwriting workshops to be conducted at ELT from February to May 2020**.** At the conclusion of the workshops the plays will be considered for inclusion in the ELT One Act Play Season in 2021.

Cost will be $300 plus Eltham Little Theatre Membership fee of $25.

Please email info@elthamlittletheatre.org.au if you are interested. Places are strictly limited.

1. **The Convenor**

Michael has been involved in the performing arts for many years, starting in 1993 with writing, producing and directing his first play, *Cannibals of the Heart*, at the Organ Factory in Clifton Hill. Since 1993 he has written over 30 one-act plays which have been performed around the world, including Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Europe, Africa and the US. His work has won numerous awards both for writing, and for directing and acting. He has written a number of full-length plays as well as short plays. *Two Women & A Chair*, produced at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2004) and the Prague Fringe Festival (2008) is probably his best known work.

In 2014 his show, *Dog Day Trio*, was performed at La Mama as part of the Explorations season. In the same year ELT produced his one-act play *Dreams of Justine*, directed by Roderick Chappel.

In 2017 *Skin* was a finalist in the National Playwright Competition. In 2019 his monologue, *Comet's Tail*, was part of the Melbourne Writers' Theatre (MWT) show the Daring Dog Monologues. In November his short play, *Arriving Today*, was a part of the MWT's show Six Degrees at a HOT Melbourne Market at the Gasworks Arts Park.

He has had extensive experience offering his dramaturgical skills to many theatre companies and individuals, including the Playhouse Actor's Group, HATS, Hartwell Players, Pop Culture Theatre, the Saint Andrews Players, and Victorian Writers' Centre mentor Lyndel Caffrey.

The writing workshop he conducted last year at Essendon Theatre Company (ETC) resulted in their one-act play show called *Home Grown*. One of the scripts from this workshop won Best Original Script at the Macedon and Dandenong Ranges One-Act Play Festivals.

His work can be accessed via his website at [www.michaelolsen.com.au.](http://www.michaelolsen.com.au/)

In addition, Michael has a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Melbourne Polytechnic, 2015).

1. **The Vision for the Work-Shops**

Michael would like to share his extensive writing experience to empower others to develop their playwriting skills. One-act plays especially are a great place to start to learn the fundamentals of playwriting. There is a lot of poor quality writing that he has encountered, especially on the one-act play circuit and he would like to take some steps to remedy this. He is also interested to hear and see different voices and different stories onstage. What are the stories from around Eltham that are not being heard?

Plays produced from these workshops will be considered for the Eltham Little Theatre 2021 One Act Play season.

1. **The Workshops.**

The workshop model is as follows:

A series of 1-1½ hour weekly writing workshops covering different areas of playwriting e.g:

* Getting started: What makes a play a play? Where does inspiration come from? How do I even know I have the idea for a play on my hands?
* Characters: What makes them come alive onstage? What makes the audience interested in them?
* Dialogue: How do I make it "real"? Where does dialogue come from?
* Plot: How do I work out What Happens Next in my play? How do I structure my play?

Basically, these would provide an introduction to an understanding of playwriting. There would be a combination of written exercises and group feedback.

After this, the workshops would be conducted every fortnight, or every three weeks, to give participants the chance to write their scripts and come back to the workshop for feedback.

# **Workshop Outline**

WEEKLY: (each session 1 - 1½ hours; moving to a fortnightly or 3-week gap between sessions will depend on the participants and where they are at with their scripts; each session a combination of writing exercises and group feedback.)

## **1 . Introduction:**

- Outline of the course

- Theatrical tools available to the writer

- Start people thinking about their one-act play: an idea, image, character, argument

## **2 . Character:**

- Essential aspect of characters (and your play): CONFLICT - Internal and External forces

- What do I need to know about my characters? - plus character proformas

- What an actor is looking for in a character - keeping this in mind when writing a character

## **3 . Plot:**

- The heart of any story: why it started, what's in the character's way, and how things end

- Units of Action: what actually happens in the play - another approach to writing

- What will keep the audience interested in my play?

## **4 . Dialogue:**

- Why it's different to how people speak in real life

- Subtext - the Iceberg analogy: what the playwright is really writing.

- The connection between dialogue and character.

## **5 . Getting started:**

- Formatting - again!

- Writing the 1st draft: bypassing the Inner Critic

## **6 . Review**

- Rewriting: now for the hard part

- Instructions for cold reads and what you can get out of them

## **7 . Cold reads**

- Cold reads of peoples' plays/scenes by the group as well as group discussion

(with actors & directors as well?)

## **8 . Monthly workshops commence**

- Continuation of cold reads, including discussion/feedback of individual works

## **Final workshop**

## **9 . Actors, Directors & getting your work on:**

- The playwright's vision: how to control it as best you can

- What actors and directors are seeking in your work.

- Giving up your work - and working with actors and directors

- Getting your work out there: where to go to from here