

Toronto Fringe Appoints Rachel Kennedy as Executive Director, Co-Lead Laura Paduch as Managing Director, Co-Lead

Kate Supleve succeeds Jason Murray as Board Chair

TORONTO, January 9, 2024 – The **Toronto Fringe**, the non-profit charitable organization that runs Ontario's largest theatre festival, is proud to announce new staff appointments with **Rachel Kennedy** as Executive Director, Co-Lead and **Laura Paduch** as Managing Director, Co-Lead in advance of the 36th Annual Toronto Fringe Festival this summer. As Co-Leads, the Executive and Managing Directors will work collaboratively to carry out the vision and mandate of the Toronto Fringe, sharing responsibility for financial oversight, strategic planning and resource management of the organization. **Toronto Fringe** is also pleased to announce **Kate Supleve** as the new Chair of the Board, as **Jason Murray** passes the baton after seven dedicated years on the Board of Directors.

Rachel Kennedy is a Toronto-based arts administrator and theatre producer with a passion for advocacy, creative solutions, and amplifying local voices. Through her previous work at Playwrights Guild of Canada, Theatre Ontario, Next Generation Showcase and Toronto Arts Council / Toronto Arts Foundation, she has been connecting with artists across Toronto and beyond as they develop their practices and seek to increase equity within our sector. As an independent producer, Rachel's first show was staged through the Toronto Fringe Festival and she has continued to enthusiastically engage with the organization's annual offerings ever since. She is grateful to count herself among the *many* indie theatre workers whose careers have benefited from the Toronto Fringe. Now, Rachel could not be more excited to be joining a team that has shown such immense dedication to reducing barriers and providing professional development to Toronto's artists. She is excited to take the political knowledge, strategic thinking, and relationship-building skills that she gleaned from her previous work and apply them in this exciting new co-leadership position.

Laura Paduch has had the privilege of serving the Toronto Fringe Festival community as Managing Director since 2018, and she is thrilled to take on the elevated role of Managing Director, Co-Lead alongside Rachel Kennedy. Laura is an arts leader and advocate, with over a decade of experience in event production, arts administration, theatre producing, project and stage management, and performance creation. She is a grateful mentee and proud mentor, and a social justice apprentice who is passionate about equity, accessibility, and normalizing arts workers as deserving of healthy and fair workplaces. The Toronto Fringe offers a community conduit that enables her to champion mentorship, resource sharing, sector development, and to chip away at systemic barriers to the arts. She advanced the inaugural joint management of fu-GEN Theatre Company and ARC as General Manager, benefited from a co-internship with Musical Stage Company and the Canadian Dance Assembly, and has worked with many theatre companies and notable independents. She sits on the TAPA Advocacy Committee, the ArtsVote Steering Committee, and is a member of the board and chair of the Policy and Governance Committee for the Canadian Alliance of Fringe Festivals.

After seven years of serving on the Board of Directors for the Toronto Fringe, **Jason Murray** is passing the

baton of Chair to his esteemed colleague **Kate Supleve**, who previously served as Vice Chair.

Kate Supleve is the Co-Executive Director of The Musical Stage Company and specializes in fund development, capacity building and artistic producing. Since 2008, she has worked in audience development and production management, as director, artistic associate, producer, Director of Development, and Executive Director for institutions that include Rainbow Stage, Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg Jewish Theatre, Pantages Playhouse, Bravura Theatre, and the Winnipeg Fringe Festival.

Jason Murray is the Founder, President, and Managing Partner at BIPOC Executive Search. He was a Partner at a multi-national executive search firm prior to launching his own, and spent some time at Deloitte where he was a supervisor for the divisions of Human Capital and Strategy & Operations. Jason, himself, spent a number of years in performance—he, for example, was in the original Toronto cast of *Mamma Mia!* with Mirvish Productions, and was directly involved in a number of shows that appeared in Toronto Fringe. During his tenure on the board of the Toronto Fringe, Jason has led the recruitment of two Executive Director searches (leading to the appointment of Lucy Eveleigh in 2017 and of Rachel Kennedy in 2024); recruited and onboarded over 20 new Board members; worked in partnership with Board colleagues to revamp governance manuals; was Chair through two strategic planning cycles and an EDI Audit; built effective structures, campaigns, and teams at Toronto Fringe to ensure fiscal prudence while raising funds; provided unfailing leadership throughout the pandemic; and, encouraged bold and courageous thinking from everyone during his tenure, and always with a smile. The Toronto Fringe is incredibly grateful for all of Jason's work and support.

QUOTES:

Toronto Fringe has been an essential staple both in the Toronto Theatre scene, and in the careers of countless artists here. It is an honour to join this incredible team and get to work preparing for the 2024 Festival. Thank you to the Toronto Fringe staff and board for their immense support, and for providing such a warm welcome. - **Rachel Kennedy, Executive Director, Co-Lead**

The Fringe is a fundamental platform and cornerstone of the Toronto arts sector, and it has been a privilege to be a steward of this organization for the past six years. I am beyond excited for what the next chapter will bring for our vibrant indie arts community. A great festival is a sum of its best asset - the humans who make it - and I am blessed to work with some of the most incredible humans around. Toronto Fringe is heading into a new formative era that I cannot wait to co-create with everyone. - **Laura Paduch, Managing Director, Co-Lead**

The Fringe is where it all begins and a vital part of Toronto's arts ecosystem. It is where so many great artists, ideas and careers are born and I'm honoured and thrilled to be part of this exciting next chapter in its history. - **Kate Supleve, Chair of the Board**

Toronto Fringe has positively impacted the lives of so many, including my own; truly, it has been an absolute pleasure serving as Board Chair these last number of years. The festival is a cornerstone of Toronto's arts ecology, fostering new works that not only enrich our cultural tapestry but works that play a

central role in growing our country's overall economy. Given all of these reasons, how could I not be inspired to serve? And for all of these reasons, I hope everyone will continue to show their support of the Fringe. - **Jason Murray, Outgoing Board Chair**

Toronto Fringe is a grassroots, charitable organization that runs the Toronto Fringe Festival each July, the Next Stage Theatre Festival each October, and various year-round programs that benefit youth, emerging artists, BIPOC artists, artists with disabilities, and the performing arts community at large. Embedded in Fringe's operations are the values of Access, Accountability, Creativity, Exploration, and Support.

36th Annual Toronto Fringe Festival

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www.FringeToronto.com

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