

# Once again, 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival Smashes All Box Office Records

**July 15, 2019 (Toronto, ON).** The 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival wrapped up yesterday after 12 successful days of live theatre, dance, comedy, musicals and increased free programming at Fringe’s patio, POSTSCRIPT. Toronto Fringe is pleased to report that ticket sales for the 2019 Fringe Festival were \$40,000 ahead of the incredibly successful 2018 Fringe Festival – making it **the best-selling Toronto Fringe of all time**. In a time of austerity and cutbacks, Fringe is proud to announce that the indie, grassroots theatre spirit is alive and well – and people are flocking to this 31-year-old movement, which has become a feeder-system of the performing arts ecology in Canada.

The festival launched opening day with a visit from **Mayor John Tory, who took selfies with indie artists and chatted with Fringe volunteers over butter tarts**, and the festival wrapped with a boisterous closing weekend packed with the best indie music talent the country has to offer, as part of the PS: Music Fest.

**68,000 tickets** were issued to theatre-loving patrons over the 12-day festival. As Fringe returns 100% of net box office revenue to its artists, this means that **\$590,000 is going straight into the pockets of Fringe’s independent artists**. This is an increase of just over \$40,000 from our 2018 festival.

**Lucy Eveleigh, Toronto Fringe’s Executive Director, says:**

“We are so immensely proud of the Festival this year, which showcased such a wide variety of themes and artists. One of the things that struck me most this year was the support the artists offered one another, giving shout-outs to other shows after performances, sharing on social media and a general comradery that permeated throughout the festival. Our POSTSCRIPT patio was a beautiful success with an incredible line-up of music, artists and installations. We found a direct correlation between new audiences being brought to the patio and an increase in box office revenue – as people discovered POSTSCRIPT, they also discovered Fringe.”

**Jason Murray, the Chair of Toronto Fringe’s Board of Directors, says:**

“The Fringe is a huge contributor to what makes Toronto so great over the summer. It brings out communities, ignites excitement, and enables us to form memories that last a lifetime. Who wouldn’t want to experience a festival that’s able to do all of that? Few festivals can boast, with confidence, that there’s something for everyone, so we’re steadfast in our goal of having Fringe become one of those festivals that everyone knows about. We encourage the greater community to be a part of making this happen. Let’s raise the bar with each passing year!”

## Breakout Hits

It's no surprise that ***Boy Falls from the Sky: Jake Epstein Live at Supermarket*** was one of the runaway successes of the festival. This autobiographical musical cabaret, featured on the cover of NOW Magazine, sold out its entire run before opening day, and will be going on to the Best of Fringe at Toronto Centre for the Arts. It was the most sought-after ticket at the festival.

Two smash hits from the festival (***Through the Bamboo*** and ***Tita Jokes***) were investigations of Filipino culture – and even invented a hashtag to mark the occasion, #FilipinxFringe. Three generations of Filipino families were seen hanging out at the Factory Theatre before and after the family-friendly ***Through the Bamboo***, created and produced by husband-and-wife team Byron Abalos and the 9-months-pregnant Andrea Mapili. The show was a heart-warming hit and was awarded Patron's Pick. ***Tita Jokes***, calling themselves the "Spice Girls of comedy," built their show around the concept of "titas" (or aunts) and the show also saw incredible attention, sold-out performances, and won the Second City Best Comedy award as well as Patron's Pick.

***Clotheswap***, a show by Fringe and Second City veterans Amanda Barker and Dale Boyer also garnered major media attention and buzz. Media outlets ranging from Global Morning to CBC's Here and Now to Fashion Magazine covered this unique piece that combined theatre and a real life clothing swap – members of the audience were encouraged to bring clothes to the show, which took place at the Textile Museum, for the interactive swap at the end.

***Drama 101***, a crowd-pleasing musical that featured local teens, was a fan favourite. Selling out all its performances at the Robert Gill Theatre, this show was the Patron's Pick for that venue. ***Drama 101*** was created by well-known theatre creators Kevin Wong and Steven Gallagher, and will likely see remounts in the future.

Site-specific shows were also in high demand this year, with ***Death Ray Cabaret***, staged at the Monarch Tavern, being awarded the first NNNNN review of the festival, which created a run on tickets that resulted in almost all performances selling out. ***Deep End*** (a show staged in the swimming pool of the JCC) was a sleeper hit of the festival, and people flocked to this innovative setting, which sold out its entire run. Other popular site-specific shows included ***Beneath the Bed*** and ***Scadding***, which both took place in the Scadding Court Community Centre, and ***The December man (L'homme de décembre)***, which took place at Eastminster United Church.

## Tip the Fringe

Since the Fringe is a not-for-profit organization and registered charity, it relies in part on the support of donors to keep the lights on and the administrative systems running. Every year, patrons standing in line outside of venues are asked by their Front of House teams to "Tip the

Fringe” and donate any loose change to the Fringe’s bottom line. If patrons donate at least \$5, they are offered a button that says “I tipped the Fringe” that many wear with pride. This year, for the first time, Fringe patrons enjoyed a series of four “collect them all” Tip the Fringe buttons. Our generous audiences raised \$42,000 for the festival in 2019.

## Started at the Fringe

The Toronto Fringe Festival has been a launchpad for artists for 31 years now, and the 2019 festival was no different. There is no doubt that shows – some of those listed above and some not yet on the industry’s radar – will emerge with remounts, tours, TV-options and more. To acknowledge the special place that Fringe plays in the ecology of the Canadian performing arts community, this year Fringe was pleased to work with Ins Choi on a mini-documentary about his show, *Kim’s Convenience*, which started at the Fringe in 2011 and has now gone on to become an international sensation.

The teaser for this mini-documentary was screened at the POSTSCRIPT patio before every event, and is available on our website as well. The full length interview will be released in the fall.

View the video: <https://fringetoronto.com/fringe/about>

## POSTSCRIPT and the PS: Music Fest

2019 was the third year that POSTSCRIPT, the Fringe patio, took place at the Scadding Court Community Centre, with the hub of activities being in the outdoor hockey rink. It was the second year that the patio has been branded as POSTSCRIPT and has widened its programming to include the PS: Music Fest, comedy nights, artist installations and activations. This year saw the expansion of the PS: Music Fest thanks to the investment of Celebrate Ontario, and programming support from Slight Music and City Hall Live. Our partners at Venus Fest and Futuro Libre music festivals lined up performances by some of Canada’s top indie music acts such as Narcy, Moscow Apartment, Cartel Madras, Maylee Todd and SATE. Thousands of people of all ages partied at POSTSCRIPT this year.

For the third year in a row, Kanto by Tita Flips served up elevated Filipino treats to hungry patio-goers and the festival’s beer sponsor, Steam Whistle, served up cold beverages for thirsty festival-goers.

**Highlights at POSTSCRIPT:**

- Opening night: Mayor John Tory and other local elected officials (MPP Chris Glover, MPP Jessica Bell, City Councillor Joe Cressy) attended our opening night party to kick-off the festival, and were treated to a Steam Whistle toast and Maple Key Tart Co. butter tarts.
- The Main Ingredient Silent Disco: back by popular demand, the crowd-favourite Silent Disco by The Main Ingredient saw Fringers dancing like no one could hear. Every participant was given a set of headphones and danced until the wee hours of the morning to three different DJ sets.
- Awards Night: Artists flocked to the patio for the announcement of the Patron's Picks, Best of Fringe series' and other awards such as the David Seguin Memorial Award for Accessibility in the Arts. Hosted by CBC's Ali Hassan.
- Drag Queen Cocktail Hour: sponsored by Nickel9 Distillery, this event featured popular local queens from House of Lix lighting up the stage with interactive performances and mixing up signature cocktails.
- Neville's Next Gen Night: Long-time Fringe donor Neville Austin supported this evening that gave a platform to youth from the AMY Project and Paprika Festival. Members of these organizations performed excerpts from works-in-progress.

## What we're looking forward to next

Best of Fringe has expanded to now offer three opportunities across Ontario to watch hit Fringe shows outside the downtown core.

### Best of Fringe: TO LIVE

Ten shows will play at the Toronto Centre of the Arts after successful runs at the 2019 Festival. Tickets to Best of Fringe: TO LIVE are available via the Toronto Centre for the Arts online at [www.tocentre.com/bof19](http://www.tocentre.com/bof19) and over the phone at 1-855-985-2787.

### Best of Fringe Cedar Ridge Creative Centre (Scarborough)

Cedar Ridge has selected one show from the 2019 Toronto Fringe to play again after the Toronto Fringe Festival. Tickets to Best of Fringe Cedar Ridge Creative Centre (Scarborough) can be purchased on the Toronto Fringe's website or by calling our box office at 416-966-1062.

### North (519) Best of Fringe (Orangeville)

Theatre Orangeville selected three shows from the 2019 Toronto Fringe to play again after the Toronto Fringe Festival. Tickets to North (519) Best of Fringe (Orangeville) can be purchased [www.theatreorangeville.ca](http://www.theatreorangeville.ca) or 519-942-3423 or 1-800-424-1295.

## **Next Stage 2020**

The Next Stage Theatre Festival will run January 9 – 20, 2020 at the Factory Theatre. This will be the thirteenth year of Next Stage – the festival will become a teenager this year! Look out for the line-up in the fall.

## **Lottery applications**

As always, the lottery for the 2020 Fringe Festival will open up in the fall. The 2020 Fringe Festival will run July 1 – 12, 2020. Fringe will also open up the New Play Contest, 24 Hour Playwriting Contest and the Adams Prize for Best Musical contest in the fall.

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