

# The 30<sup>th</sup> Toronto Fringe Festival Launches Itself into the Next 30 Years with Record-Breaking Sales

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Toronto, ON – The 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival boasts the highest ever ticket revenue, smashing the new records set during the 2017 festival. **66,301 tickets** were issued to theatre-loving patrons over the 12-day festival. As Fringe returns 100% of net box office revenue, this means that **\$531,293.50 is going straight into the pockets of the artists**. Ticket prices were raised this year from \$10 + services fees to \$11 + service fees, which contributed to the increase in revenue.

Every year, Fringe brings in tens of thousands of new patrons to the theatre community, demonstrating that **live performance can be fun, affordable, intimate and inviting**. These patrons go on to frequent other theatres throughout the year, making Fringe the invaluable feeder-system of the Canadian performing arts ecology.

This year, the Toronto Fringe saw its **highest opening day sales ever**. It was also the first year in recent history that NOW Magazine had the capacity to review all 158 shows in the festival, with the help of emerging critics from Generator' Performance Criticism Training Program.

## **Breakout Hits:**

Our diverse, eclectic, and adventurous 158 shows were truly a feast for the artistically curious. This year we had 14 main venues and 29 site specific venues, 7 of which were beyond the usual Fringe catchment area (University to Dovercourt, Dupont to King). Although every show had something special and memorable to offer, each year there are a few breakout hits that may become the next big thing.

Musicals and cabarets stole the show this festival. *Judas Star Supersong*, a one-woman adaptation of *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Paula Wolfson, won over audience and critics' hearts and earned the first NNNNN review from NOW Magazine by the first weekend of the festival. *Josephine: A Burlesque Cabaret Dream Play*, an award-winning off-Broadway musical about the iconic Josephine Baker, portrayed by Tymisha Harris, was an immense fan-favourite, with audiences clamouring for a Toronto remount. *The Preposterous Predicament of Polly Peel (Act 1)*, the winner of this year's Paul O'Sullivan Prize for Musical Theatre, sponsored by the Pat & Tony Adams Freedom Fund, was the run-away blockbuster of the festival. Its book written by Julie Tepperman and music & lyrics by Kevin Wong tell the story of a biology-obsessed eleven-year-old girl, portrayed by Dora-nominated young actress Hannah Levinson.

Comedy and good laughs were very well-received by patrons this summer. The Fringe's favourite clowns, Morro and Jasp, also played to sold-out houses with their new show *Morro & Jasp: Save the Date*. The musically-influenced comedy *First Dates* by Wes and Aaron Berger packed in audiences to see this show about searching for romantic connection in these fragile times. And David Seguin Memorial Award for Accessibility in the Arts winner *Generally Hospital* by All Access Sketch presented a side-splitting comedic revue about hospitals and bodily functions.

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Many of this year's site-specific shows (shows that took place in non-traditional theatre venues) received critical acclaim and full houses. *Featherweight*, a new play by Tom McGee and produced by Kat Sandler, tells the story of Jeff who is judged after his death by the gods based on the contents of his browser history. *Harvey & the Extraordinary* by Eliza Martin took place in a garage where patrons were treated to the extraordinary in the ordinary of a child's dreams to join the circus. *St. Peon of the People*, a walking tour around the Queen Street West neighbourhood by Caroline Azar, took its audience on an interactive tour of the neighbourhood with Officer Rita (Jamillah Ross).

There is no way to list all the hits of this year's festival, but we are very proud of the producing power of this cohort of artists and the taste-making power of our audiences, who have the influence to determine festival hits. This festival still runs on word of mouth, which is reflected in the [Patron's Picks awards](#). Shows with the best sales in each main venue are given an extra show on the final Sunday of the festival, so that audiences have a second chance to catch sold-out shows.

## **#StartedAtTheFringe**

The Toronto Fringe's fundraising campaign to raise \$100,000 in honour of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a massive success. Between individual donations and "Tip the Fringe" revenue at venues, the festival raised **\$100,557.14** as of midnight on July 15. The campaign kicked off in May with a [video featuring Trey Anthony's story](#) of opening *'Da Kink In My Hair* at the 2001 Toronto Fringe Festival, which was followed by many other videos and stories from current and past Fringe artists, patrons, staff, and volunteers. An anonymous donor offered to match donations up to \$10,000 during the first weekend of the festival. Fringers rose to the challenge and raised \$11,000 over July 7-8. The campaign continues until July 31.

## **POSTSCRIPT, the Toronto Fringe's newly designed patio**

Building on last year's move from Honest Ed's to Scadding Court Community Centre, the 2018 festival's patio space in the hockey rink at Scadding Court broke all records. The new design and rebrand by Matthew Cohen Design Collective, coupled with the expert programming by Fringe staff and guest curators, catapulted POSTSCRIPT into the spotlight as Toronto's largest pop-up patio.

Attendance at the patio increased over 2017, with approximately 15,000 total visits over the 12 days of the festival. Patrons at the patio ranged from Fringe artists and staff, to curious Torontonians looking for a hidden gem of a watering-hole. Bar revenue broke all records, grossing over \$100,000 to the festival through food and beverage sales.

This year the patio was brought to you by KOHO, a new app and reloadable Visa card to help Canadians save and take back their dreams. KOHO premiered their promotional art film *Dream Thieves*, directed by Fleur Fortuné, at POSTSCRIPT to great interest from Fringers. We look forward to seeing how this partnership develops. 2018 also marked the fourth year of our partnership with Steam Whistle Brewery who continue to support indie artists in Toronto. Thanks to all the 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival partners and sponsors, without which the festival could not continue.

Programming highlights included:

- **Opening Parade** – artists marched from Kensington Market to POSTSCRIPT to kick off the opening of the 30<sup>th</sup> festival.
- **Citizenship Ceremony** – in partnership with the Scadding Court Community Centre, the Toronto Fringe hosted a private citizenship ceremony on July 6 for 91 new Canadians, representing 20 countries.

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- **Comedy Night** – a killer line-up of some of Toronto’s top stand-up comics performed on the first Saturday night, and featured Nick Reynoldson, Rhiannon Archer, and more.
- **Youth Takeover** – emerging artists from the AMY Project and the Paprika Festival performed on the POSTSCRIPT stage and had a mixer with industry professionals.
- **Teen Fringe** – young performers rehearsed for 5 days to create a small showcase on the POSTSCRIPT stage on the final Saturday of the Festival.
- **PS: Music Fest** – guest curators from Wavelength Music, Venus Fest, Slight Music, and Futuro Libre programmed four days of music on the POSTSCRIPT stage, featuring up-and-coming Toronto talents like The Sorority, Bonjay, Moon King, Kirk Diamond, and more.
- **Silent Disco** – The Main Ingredient hosted a bumping line up of DJs to play through head phones, while Fringers danced late into the night.
- **1989 Prom Party** – Fringers came together to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> year of Fringe with an 80s-themed prom party in the Scadding Court gym, complete with a karaoke cover band, balloon arch, and disco ball.

### **What we are looking forward to:**

Was there a show you were dying to see, but it sold out before you could get a ticket? [Best of Fringe Orangeville](#) (July 20-21) and Best of Fringe at Toronto Centre of the Arts (August 17) are remounting some of the hit shows from the 2018 Toronto Fringe. The Comedy Bar will also be announcing the winner for the Comedy Bar Award for Best Comedy this week, giving one of the hit comedies from the festival a showcase in the next few months.

The 2019 Next Stage Theatre Festival takes place at Factory Theatre from January 9-20.

The 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival takes place July 3-14. Applications for the 2019 lottery will open in October 2018. Check <https://fringetoronto.com/year-round/artist-opportunities> for more details as they are released.

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